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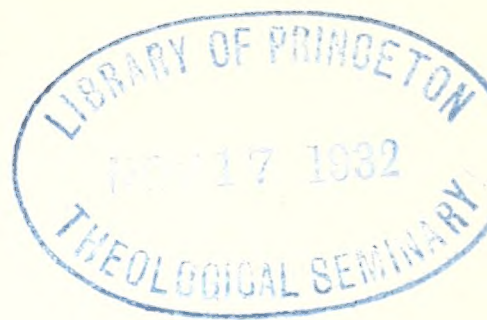
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STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE









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STUDIES  
IN  
CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

✓  
BY  
JAMES DRUMMOND, M.A. (OXON)

LL.D., HON. D. LITT. (DUBLIN), D.D. (TUFTS)

Τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐδεὶς ἔγνωκεν εἰ μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ  
τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου ἐλάβομεν ἀλλὰ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἵνα  
εἰδῶμεν τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ χαρισθέντα ἡμῖν.

LONDON  
PHILIP GREEN, 5 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1908



PRINTED BY ELSOM AND CO., HULL



TO  
THE AUTHOR'S FRIENDS AND PUPILS  
WHO, FREE FROM DOGMATIC RESTRICTIONS,  
HAVE SOUGHT WITH HIM  
FOR A DEEPER KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE TRUTH,  
AND TO  
THE CHURCHES OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS  
WHICH HAVE STOOD FAST IN THE LIBERTY  
WITH WHICH CHRIST HAS MADE THEM FREE  
AND REFUSED TO IMPOSE CONDITIONS OF COMMUNION  
WHICH HE DID NOT IMPOSE,  
THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED







## PREFACE

THE general scheme of thought on which the contents of this volume are based was sketched out many years ago. Large portions of it have for a considerable time been delivered as lectures at Manchester College. It is only at the earnest request of friends that it is now reduced to book form, and, with various additions, given to the public. Its origin, making it a small part of a complete curriculum, may explain what would otherwise seem to be serious omissions. The philosophical discussion of the fundamental doctrines of religion, a review of the most important problems affecting the use and interpretation of the Bible, and the question of miracles as the guarantee of a dogmatic revelation, were provided for in other courses ; and an exposition and criticism of modern schools of theology, and an appreciation of individual writers, however eminent, would have demanded an undue enlargement of the course, and hardly fell within its proper scope. I am well aware that even within the confessional churches many theologians consider themselves only loosely bound by their standards, and that the Catholic Church itself is feeling the effects of a wave of 'modernity' ; but till the standards are altered, they hold the field, against individual opinion, as the collective expression of the Church's

thought, and it may be that the constant pressure of their dead weight will in time suppress every freer movement. Their leading ideas are still prevalent, and, in spite of dissentient voices, are seriously maintained by numbers of cultivated and earnest men. It was with these publicly recognized doctrines that I had to deal, leaving to the critical historian an estimate of the views of individual thinkers. While I have been compelled by the evidence, as it presented itself to my own mind, to reject some long-established doctrines, and to criticize them with perfect frankness, it has been my endeavour to do so in no controversial spirit. I have wished to treat every serious form of thought with sincere respect, and, where I am unable to accept it, to trace it to its spiritual roots, and to conserve some underlying truth, which may at once appeal to the religious sensibility and satisfy the instructed intellect. For the statement of ecclesiastical doctrines I have always resorted to established authorities, and it has been my earnest endeavour not to misrepresent views from which I dissent. In presenting adverse arguments I have used only such as have seriously affected my own judgment; and even to those who regard my denials as fallacious it may be useful to know exactly the difficulties that press upon the mind of another. I have been anxious to exhibit fairly such current arguments as appear to me unsound; and if in any instance I have failed to do so, my want of success is due to a defect of understanding, and not to any wish to weaken the effect of an argument by placing it in a false light. How far I have succeeded I must leave it to others to judge. I can only hope that in the changing thought in the midst of which we live my work may afford some help to a few seeking



souls, and enable them, through the imperfect forms of thought, to discern, if only in dim outline, the eternal Spirit of Truth.

I must acknowledge, with warm thanks, the generosity and confidence with which the Committee of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association undertook to publish a work which they had not seen, and in the preparation of which they exacted no conditions. The authorities of that Association are well aware that it is not in me to write a party manifesto, and they can have no wish to receive such at my hands. This fact proves, what it may be as well to state explicitly, that members of the Association are in no way committed to any opinions which are expressed in this volume, nor am I committed to any opinions but my own, and to these only so long as the evidence appears to me to render them certain or probable. We have no authoritative creed to which individual thought must bow. We all alike have but one aim, Truth; and truth presents itself in many partial phases to differently constituted minds. There are diversities of opinions, but one Spirit; and all faithful souls are moving, on different sides, towards one luminous peak, where Truth stands transfigured in heavenly light, far above the fogs and doubts of earth.

JAMES DRUMMOND.

OXFORD, *October*, 1907.





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

	PAGES
INTRODUCTION	I-6
Definition of Doctrinal Theology, 1.	
Distinction of Doctrinal from Dogmatic Theology, 1-5 : Meaning of dogma, 1-2 ; of a Creed, and of a Confession, 2 ; dogma not necessary for religious societies, 2-3 ; definitions of Dogmatics, 3-4 ; objection to Dogmatics, 4 ; inevitable pre-judgments, 5.	
Agreement of method with that in other branches of study, 5.	
Aim of the work, 6.	
 PART I	
 SOURCES OF DOCTRINE	
 CHAPTER I	
 DIVISION OF THE SUBJECT	7-8
The primary question relates to sources and method, 7. Protestant, Roman, and Greek view, 7. A preliminary question relates to the human mind, 7-8.	
 CHAPTER II	
 THE HUMAN MIND	9-81
1. The Rights and Limitations of the Intellect	9-14
The rights of the intellect not destroyed by an infallible dogmatic revelation, 9-12 : for (1) The infallibility can be established only by reason, and (2) The evidence depends partly on the contents of the revelation, 10. Examples, 10-11. But there may be doctrines beyond the range of our faculties, 11. Statement of principles, 11-12.	

	PAGES
Limitations of the rational and critical powers, 12-14: two kinds of temperament, and of theological questions, 12-13. Inalienable rights of the intellect, 13. Danger of one-sided intellectualism, 13-14.	12-14
<b>2. The Moral Nature and Revelation</b>	14-20
Connexion of the moral nature with theology, 14-15.	
Revelation and Ethics, 15-19: (1) There might be authoritative rules before the knowledge of higher motives, 15-16. (2) There might be rules relating to a single motive, 17-18. (3) Higher motives might be made known, 18-19.	
But Christian Ethics not to be included in Dogmatics, 19-20.	
<b>3. The Religious Element</b>	20-81
Questions relating to it, 20.	
(a) The existence of the Religious Element, 20-32: Proposition, 20-21. Sense in which Religion is used, 21; Definitions to be avoided, 21-23. The evidence—1. Our consciousness, 23-24. 2. Universality, 24-31. Objections to the argument (a) religion may be an invention, 25-26; (b) it may be due to traditional beliefs, 26-27. Answers (1) that only can be developed which exists in germ, 27; (2) our judgment of religious motives, 27-28; (3) not probable that accidental transmission could secure universality, 28-29; (4) when religion has been discarded, it has always revived, 29; distinction from religious prejudices, 29-30. (c) Religious knowledge may be derived from other knowledge, 30; but religion includes emotion, 30-31. 3. Special phenomena in the manifestation of religion, 31-32.	
(b) The Religious Element points to an Object or Objects answering to it, 32-37: Nature of the inquiry, 32. Religious feelings exist only in relation to an object, and tend to create a belief in the existence of the object, 33. Objections: emotions lead to delusions; but delusions are temporary, 34-35; the thing to be proved is assumed; but there must be an ultimate assumption, 35-36. The conclusion confirmed by the whole analogy of our nature, 36-37.	
(c) Testimony of the Religious Element to doctrines, 37-45: Proposition stated, 37. The satisfaction of an inward want an evidence of truth, 37-38; for (1) it follows from what has been said about the Religious Element; and (2) the proposition is supported by the facts of consciousness, 38-41. Objections: (1) beliefs maintaining themselves in this way may be mere prejudices, 41; but (a) they are more persistent, (b) they tend to recur, (c) they are felt to have a divine claim	



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

xiii

PAGES  
41-81

- upon us, (d) they are often opposed to our prejudices, 41-43 ; (2) many such beliefs have been mere errors, 43 ; but these errors may be partially true (instance, the idea of sacrifice), 43-44 ; (3) We have the same tendency to believe what satisfies a prejudice ; this undoubtedly shows liability to error and need of care, 44-45.
- (d) Nature of the Religious Element, 45-51 : to be learned by an examination of facts, 45-47. It includes feeling, knowing, and doing, 47-49. Resulting classification of the kinds of religion, 49-51.
- (e) Catholic self-knowledge, 51-61 : two modes of regarding the capacity of the religious nature, 51-54 : recognition of spiritual truth, 51-53 ; discovery and construction, 53-54. Source of knowledge, our own consciousness, 54-55 ; difficulty arising from this, 55-56 ; self-knowledge must be catholic, 56-57. Lines of tendency described, 57-61.
- (f) Sources of error, 61-74 : (1) incapacity for intellectual formulation, 61-62 ; (2) failures in the religious consciousness, (a) want of proper balance in its contents, 62-64 ; (b) absence of some of its constituents, 64-65 ; (c) reliance on a prejudice or idiosyncrasy, 65-66, nevertheless an idiosyncrasy may anticipate the universal, 66-68. Hence spiritual discernment has various degrees, and is susceptible of cultivation and growth, 68-74. Examples : belief in the existence of God, 68-69 ; in his attributes, 69-70 ; knowledge of the human soul 70-71 ; recognition of spiritual relations, 71-73. Two resulting facts, 73-74.
- (g) Confirmatory facts, 74-78 : (1) diversity of theological belief, 74-75 ; (2) men have a power of seeing the truth of a doctrine which they could not have discovered, 75-76 ; (3) dependence on authority, 76 ; (4) revolts against authority, 76-77 ; (5) men cling to a creed after they have ceased to believe in it literally, 77.
- (h) Revelation, 78-81 : (1) might be given of truths which the human mind normally could not have discovered, 78-79 ; (2) might be given of truths which the mind normally reaches only by a tedious process, 79 ; (3) might be given of the spirit which is the ground of doctrinal truth, 79-81.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE BIBLE

82-97

Traditional view, 82-89 : Catholic dogma, 82-83 ; doctrine of the Church of England, 83-84 ; doctrine of the Westminster

	PAGES
always have had an object of love, 146-149 ; but the idea of a Divine society is pure polytheism, 149-150 ; the discussion rests upon an anthropopathic conception of God, 150 ; a similar argument will apply to the creativeness of God, 150-153 ; love among infinite equals is no evidence of love towards finite beings, 153. (3) It is said that a second person is involved in the idea of eternal personality, 153-154. Objections to this view, 154-155. This kind of speculation is beyond the compass of our thought, 155-156.	146-162
Objections to the doctrine from the side of reason, 156-159 :—	
(1) Each person must contain a trinity, 157 ; (2) Each person must have something besides the Divine essence, 157-158 ; (3) Each person must have something impersonal in addition to personality, 158 ; (4) The idea of three persons with one reason and will is unthinkable, 158. These difficulties not to be evaded by calling the doctrine a mystery, 158-159.	
Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, 159-162 :—	
Origin of the Christian belief, 159-160. Ideas attached to the word 'spirit,' 160-161. The diffused influence beyond comprehension, 161-162. The view suggested is consistent with the early confession of the Church, 162.	

## CHAPTER III

## AGENCY AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD 163-186

God the Creator, 163-173. Question whether the universe is eternal, 165-166. Evolution and creation, 166-168. The reason for creation, 168-169. God the preserver, and destroyer, 169-170. Mediate and immediate action of God, 170-171. Doctrine of angels, 171-173.
Attributes involved in our intellectual idea of God, 173-179 : Question whether attributes violate the Divine unity, 173. God's omnipresence, 173-174. His omniscience, 174-176. His omnipotence, 176-179.
God as the reality of ideal good, 179-186 : His holiness, 179-180. His righteousness, 180-185 : nature of punishment, 181-183. Purposes of punishment : first, it is an expression of moral disapproval, 183 ; secondly, it opposes a barrier to the commission of wrongdoing, 183-184. Hence rule for the infliction or remission of punishment, 184-185. Wisdom of God, 185. His love, 185-186.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

xvii

PAGES

## CHAPTER IV

### GOD AS THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP

187-202

First, he is an object of veneration and love on account of his spiritual perfection, 187.

Secondly, he is the bounteous Giver, 187-188.

Thirdly, he is the object of trust, 188-195 : Ethnic and Christian view of providence, 188-189. Distinctions made by dogmatists, 189-191. Ordinary and extraordinary providence, 191-192. The problem of evil, 192-195.

Lastly, he is the receiver of prayer, 196-202 : The fact on which prayer rests, 196. Division of prayer, 197. Difficulties connected with petition, 197-200. The teaching of Christ in regard to it, 200-201. Rule for the expression of desire in prayer, 201. Prayer for spiritual blessings, 202.

## PART III

### DOCTRINE OF MAN

203-239

Man's ideal condition, 203-204.

Doctrine of original righteousness, 204-206.

Problem of sin, 206-239 :—

Definition of sin as an act of will, 207-213 : Conditions of merit, 207-212 : Implications in the idea of moral desert, 208-212 : (1) The end is right actions, 208-209. (2) Conditions that must be fulfilled : (a) the action must be intentional, 209 ; (b) there must be knowledge of a better and a worse, 209-210 ; (c) the agent must act from the best motive present in his mind, 210 ; (d) there must be some degree of difficulty in the action, 210-211 ; (e) there must be liberty of choice between conflicting motives, 211-212. Recognition of merit in the New Testament, 212-213.

Sin as a perversion of our nature from its ideal end, 213-216.

Reasons which justify this extended use of the word sin, 216.

The essence of sin, 216-219 : according to some, the dominance of the sensual nature, 217. According to others, self-seeking, 217-219.

Sin is a positive evil, 219-220 : and does not belong to the essence of man, 220-221.

Sources of sin, 221-233 : The misuse of free will, 221-222.

Doctrine of the Fall, 222-233 : Theories of the origin of souls, 222-223. Original sin, 223-226. Account of the

	PAGES
Fall not historical, 226. Supposed Biblical references to it, 226-228. Good and ill mingled in human life, 228-229. Elements of truth in the doctrine, 229-233.	226-239
Doctrine of temptation, 233-239: Its inward conditions, 233-234; Its outward conditions, 234-235; Reason for liability to it, 235. Doctrine of the devil and evil spirits, 235-239: Doctrine of satanic agency accepted, but not essential in the New Testament, 236. Not easily reconciled with the doctrine of a fatherly providence, 236-237. Outbursts of moral evil, 237. Demoniactal possession, 238-239.	
PART IV	
THE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN AS AFFECTED BY HISTORICAL CONDITIONS	
CHAPTER I	
REASONS FOR SELECTING CHRISTIANITY	240-242
Our inquiry might include all the great religions, 240-241. Christianity selected as standing at the head, 241-242; and because our own religious life has been shaped by Christianity, 242.	
CHAPTER II	
RECONCILIATION	243-251
The aim of all religions, to establish harmony between the soul and God, 243.	
The need of reconciliation due to sin, 243.	
The doctrine that Christ reconciled the Father to man, 244-249: Statements of the doctrine, 244-245. This is opposed to the teaching of the New Testament, 245-248; and to the highest spiritual consciousness, 248-249.	
The doctrine that the purpose of Christianity is to reconcile the world to God, 249. This doctrine is essentially different from the other, 249-250. Meaning of 'the wrath of God,' 250-251.	
CHAPTER III	
THE PERSON OF CHRIST	252-316
Reasons for a Christology, 252-253.	
Statement of the ecclesiastical dogma, 253-259.	
Criticism of dogma, 259-282:—It cannot be exempt from criticism, 259-260. It makes Christianity entirely exceptional in the history	



of the world, 260-261. Difficulties suggested, 261-282 : First,	260-316
the vastness of the demand upon our faith, 262-263. Secondly,	
the uncertainty of the supposed Biblical proof, 263-275 : The	
doctrine nowhere stated with completeness, 263-264. Inference	
from the association of Christ with God, 264-266. Argument	
from Christ's self-assertiveness, 266-272. Argument from	
the expression 'in Christ,' 272-275. The birth from a virgin,	
275. Thirdly, the slow growth of the dogma, 275-277.	
Fourthly, general considerations, 277-282 : It does not fit	
easily into the modern knowledge of the universe, 277-279.	
It is not necessary for conversion, 279-281. It is unrepresentable	
in thought, 281-282.	
Doctrine of Kenosis, 282-285.	
Doctrine based on Christian consciousness, 285-307 : Nature	
of Christian consciousness, 285-287. Various elements in the	
impression which Jesus made upon Christendom, 287-295 : He	
was a prophet and teacher, 287-288 ; but we cannot lose the	
teacher in the truth which he taught, 288-290. He is an	
example of moral excellence, 290-291. He is 'a quickening	
spirit,' 291-293. He has brought men into a Divine com-	
munion, 293-295. Doctrines founded on these facts, 295-307 :	
Jesus was the Christ, 295-298. He was a spiritual 'Lord,'	
298-299. He was a 'Saviour,' 299-301. He was the 'Son	
of God,' 301-307.	
How is he distinguished from an ordinary man ? 307-308 : The	
question rests on a non-Christian view of man, 307. He is	
pre-eminent in religious character and originality, 307-308,	
and the man chosen to found a universal spiritual brother-	
hood, 308.	
Early Christian phrases may have been influenced by the language	
of the time, 308-312.	
The thought of God and the thought of Christ inseparable in the	
Christian mind, 312.	
Sinlessness of Christ, 312-315 : Two different ways of under-	
standing this, 312-313. The evidence, 313-315 : No trace	
of conversion, 314. His baptism, 314. His habit of solitary	
prayer, 314. He disclaimed the title 'good,' 314-315. The	
charges made by enemies, and the impression on his	
followers, 315.	
The view here presented is consistent with our enlarged knowledge	
of the universe, 315-316.	

	PAGES
CHAPTER IV	
THE WORK OF CHRIST	317-366
Division of the subject, 317-318.	
1. The Prophetic Office	318-325
Fulfilled by his teaching, 318. Doctrine of his infallibility, 318-323. Character of his teaching and authority, 323-325.	
2. Sacerdotal Office	325-363
Use of figurative terms, 325-330 : Priest, 325-326. Sacrifice, 326-329. Redemption and ransom, 329-330.	
Problem to be solved in connexion with Christ's death, 330-331 ; a pressing problem for the first disciples, 331-332.	
Doctrines of atonement, 332-347 : Vagueness of early doctrine, 332-335. Anselm's 'Cur Deus homo,' 335-341. Doctrines of different churches, 341-346. Changed view in modern times, 346-347.	
Objections to the orthodox doctrine, 347-352 : First, it falls with the doctrine of the hypostatic union, 347. Secondly, it presents a false view of God's forgiveness, 347-349. Thirdly, the comparison of sin to a debt is pushed too far, 349-350. Fourthly, the idea of meritorious work is not tenable, 350-351. Fifthly, it is unjust to punish the innocent for the guilty, 351-352. Lastly, man has some responsibility for his own destiny, 352.	
Those who hold the doctrine have no spiritual advantage, 352-353.	
True ideas involved in the doctrine, 353-359 : First, the heinousness of sin, 353-354. Secondly, the impossibility of earning God's favour, 354-355. Thirdly, the solidarity of mankind, 355-356. Fourthly, the fact that one may suffer for another, 356-357. Fifthly, value of self-sacrifice, 357-358. Lastly, Christ as representative of mankind, 358-359.	
Fundamental error in the doctrine, 359-361.	
Reason for Christ's suffering, 361-362.	
The love which bore the cross was Divine, 362.	
Christ's intercession, 362-363.	
3. Regal Office	363-366
CHAPTER V	
THE CHURCH : ITS ORIGIN AND IDEA	367-398
Importance of the Church in transmitting the influence of Christ, 367.	
Origin of the term, and its use in the New Testament, 367-368.	
Different doctrines of the Church, 368-376 : Catholic, 369-372. Protestant, 373-376.	



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

xxi

PAGES

376-398

Different ideas of unity, 376-377.	
Christ's teaching, 377-383: His conception of the kingdom of God, 377-379. His reference to the Church in Matthew xviii. 17, 379; in Matthew xvi. 18, 379-383.	
The kingdom of God not identical with the Church, 384-385.	
Insufficient evidence that Christ constituted a Church, though he is in a true sense its founder, 385-387.	
Marks of the Christian Church, 387-397:—It must be limited to the disciples of Christ, 387-389. It is an organized body animated by the spirit of Christ, 389. The 'notes' of the Church, 390-397: Unity, 390-394. Holiness, 394. Catholicity, 394-395. Apostolicity, 395-397.	
Priority of the Church to the individual, 397-398.	

## CHAPTER VI

### MEANS OF GRACE

399-462

Explanation of the term, 399.	
1. The Word of God	400-403
Different views in regard to it.	
2. The Sacraments	403-462
Original meaning of the term, 403.	
Origin and meaning of its application to Christian rites, 403-405.	
Catholic dogma as to the nature and number of the Sacraments, 405-411.	
Protestant views, 411-413.	
Criticism of the Catholic doctrine, 413-417.	
The several kinds of Sacrament, 417-462:—	
Baptism, 417-433: The Catholic dogma and administration, 417-421. Protestant views, 421-422. Criticism, 422-424. The teaching of Christ, 424-429. Its use by the primitive Church, 429-431. Suggested view, and practice, 431-433.	
Confirmation, 433-434.	
The Eucharist, 435-450: Different names for it, 435. Catholic dogma and practice, 435-438. Objections to the Catholic dogma, 438-447: Biblical evidence, 439-442; some historical evidence, 442-447. Protestant doctrine, 447-449. Doubtful whether Christ instituted the Lord's Supper as a permanent ordinance, 449. Its observance must be based on general practice, 449-450.	
Penance, 450-454: Catholic doctrine, 450-453; has some admirable features, but feeble historical foundation, 453-454.	

	PAGES
Extreme Unction, 454-456 : Doctrine, 454-455 ; insufficient Scriptural authority, 455-456.	454-462
Ordination, 456-461 : Claims of the priesthood, 456-457. Enumeration of the orders in the Catholic Church, and mode of ordination, 457-458. Orders in the Church of England, 458-459 ; in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 459. Criticism of the sacramental theory, 459-461.	
Matrimony, 461-462. Sanctity of marriage, 462.	

## CHAPTER VII

RISE AND PROGRESS OF RELIGION IN THE INDIVIDUAL	463-514
1. Predestination	463-478
Origin of the term, 463-464. Influence of Augustine, 464. Spiritual roots of the Protestant dogmas, and supposed external facts, 464-465. Protestant views of reprobation, 465-468. Contrasts of opinion, 468. Scriptural view, 468-472. Opinions as to the salvability of those outside of the Christian religion, 472-474. Criticism of exclusive views, 474-475. Exclusive claims in the New Testament accounted for, 475-477. Christ's teaching, 477-478.	
2. Grace	478-488
Questions connected with it, 478-479. Source of extreme contrasted views, 479-480. The Lutheran dogma, 480-484 : Its source in the experience of the Reformers, 480-481. The impotence of the will, 481-482. Place of the will in regeneration, 482-484.	
Catholic dogma, 484-485. Comparison of the Catholic and Protestant views, and suggested doctrine, 485-488.	
3. Conversion	488-491
Its meaning, implications, and occasions, 488-489. Is it universally required ? 490. Can it come suddenly ? 490-491.	
4. Justification	491-505
Its meaning, 491-492. Lutheran doctrine, 492-496. Doctrine of the Westminster Confession, 496. Catholic doctrine, 497-499.	
Protestant distinction between Justification and Sanctification, 499-501.	
Place of the will, 501.	
The question why some have faith, and others not, 501-502.	
Sanctification a slow process, 502-503.	
The perseverance of saints, 503-505.	



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

xxiii

PAGES

### 5. The Consummation of the Divine Life 505-514

The eternal life of Divine sonship, 505-506.

Future life, 506-514: Faith in immortality, in religions generally, and in Christianity, 506-507. Examination of the objection that it is selfish to expect it, 507-508. Of its mode we are ignorant, 509. Primitive Christian views, 509-510. The idea of retribution, 510-511. The conditions of the future life according to Catholics and Protestants, 511-512. Duration of punishment, 512-514.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ESCHATOLOGY

515-523

General idea of the kingdom of God, 515-516.

The doctrine of Christ's literal return to earth, 516-523: Christ is said to have predicted his return, 516-517. The Scriptural evidence, 517-518. A fundamental dogma in the primitive gospel, 518. Its origin, 518-519. It probably had some support in the teaching of Jesus, 519-521. But there are sayings of a different kind, and he may have been misunderstood, 521-523.

## INDEX

524-536





## INTRODUCTION

DOCTRINAL THEOLOGY is the precise, reasoned, and articulated statement of the several articles of religious belief.

By 'precise' is meant that each doctrine must be stated in a clear proposition or propositions, containing neither more nor less than the judgment which it is intended to convey.

By 'reasoned' is meant presenting the rational grounds on which the several propositions rest, a consideration of objections or difficulties, and a criticism of adverse doctrines, or doctrines believed to be erroneous, when they are of sufficient importance to call for notice.

By 'articulated' is meant arranged so as to form a coherent and orderly system.

The above definition sufficiently distinguishes our subject from Theological Ethics, which erects a theoretical scheme of morals on the basis of the religious truths established by Doctrinal Theology. These two studies form successive steps in a complete speculative system; but their objects are so distinct that they conveniently lend themselves to separate treatment.

The study upon which we now enter generally goes under the name of Dogmatics, or Dogmatic Theology. I prefer the name Doctrinal Theology for the following reason.

The word Dogma (*δόγμα*, *placitum*) was anciently used, among Greek and Roman writers, of the opinions of philosophers. In the New Testament it is used of decrees and precepts, but not of articles of belief. Among the Christians of Alexandria, however, the philosophical use was naturally followed; and from the time of Clement the term is applied

to the articles of the Christian faith. As these articles were more or less disputed, it came to signify the articles which were authoritatively ratified as expressing the belief of the Church; and it is now commonly used of the doctrines which have been sanctioned by the proper public authority as the binding creed of some particular church or sect. This limitation, indeed, is not universally accepted; but it is best to observe it, and thus to distinguish dogma from doctrine, the latter not implying any authoritative ratification. Thus every dogma is a doctrine; but not every doctrine is a dogma, and it is quite unwarrantable to infer that those who have no dogmas have therefore no doctrines. We may here subjoin a similar caution in regard to the word 'Creed.' A Creed is not properly what any individual believes, but an authorized summary of the belief accepted by some church or sect. Accordingly the Nicene and other Greek Creeds begin, not with 'I believe,' but with 'We believe.' A neglect of these plain distinctions, in order to represent others as without convictions because they have no dogmas, belongs to the claptrap of controversy. A Creed enlarged, as was so often the case after the Reformation, into a complete conspectus of theological dogmas is called a 'Confession.'

Auguste Sabatier, in a very interesting work, while recognizing that dogmas result from the decision of a competent authority, maintains that they are as necessary to a religious society as laws to a political society.<sup>1</sup> In his arguments, however, he clearly confounds dogma and doctrine. Religion undoubtedly demands intellectual expression; but this expression need not be in the authoritative and exclusive form of dogma. Science cannot exist without formulated statements, but it has no dogmas; and so religion may have a body of well-established truth, and yet be without dogmas. The Congregations commonly known as Unitarian

<sup>1</sup> *Esquisse d'une Philosophie de la Religion d'après la Psychologie et l'Histoire*, 1897, pp. 263 sq., 308.



have existed as religious societies, many of them for more than two hundred years, without any dogmas ; but they have had both doctrine and worship. To this day they have no authoritative standard, and whatever agreement of opinion there is among them is the result of independent, though concurrent, thought. This allows a wide latitude ; and when controversies arise among them, the questions at issue are freely discussed, with all earnestness indeed, but with no breach of fraternal union. The teaching function is committed to men who are expected to set forth, not dogmas which are a condition of membership, but what, after conscientious study, they earnestly believe ; and if a divergence of view becomes so wide as to render fruitful co-operation impossible, and so lead to a voluntary separation, this takes place without bitterness, and without the intervention of any kind of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Owing to this absence of dogma, theological doctrine has been able to meet inevitable changes without shocks and convulsions ; and the primary question always is, not ‘ What does the sect teach ? ’ but ‘ What is true ? ’ and in studying or writing, all thought of the sect, or of the expectations which it might be supposed to entertain, or of agreement with authoritative standards, is wholly absent from the mind. Sabatier claims an equal freedom and mobility for Protestant dogmas ;<sup>1</sup> but certainly that freedom has not existed in fact, as Sabatier himself admits ;<sup>2</sup> and a dogmatic statement, even if intended to apply only to the present time, inevitably tends to become inflexible, claims control of the future, and sets up an obstacle to progress.

The difference is now apparent between dogmatic and doctrinal theology. Dogmatic theology starts with the assumption that the dogmas of some particular church or sect are true ; and it is the duty of the dogmatist to present these with scientific precision, and to establish them rationally as part of the knowledge of the time. Thus Roses defines Dogmatics as a methodical exposition of the dogmas of the

<sup>1</sup> pp. 251, 272, 284 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 287, 297.



Christian religion, dogmas being the doctrines defined in Councils of the genuine Catholic and Orthodox Church of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Hagenbach gives it a wider extension, 'The methodical and connected exposition of Christian doctrine.'<sup>2</sup> Others, like F. A. B. Nitzsch, confine themselves to 'Evangelical Dogmatics'; and Kaftan distinctly maintains that every exposition of Dogmatics must be based on the accepted views of some definite confessional Church.<sup>3</sup> There is, however, some justification for this mode of treatment. It is assumed that the work of 'Apologetic' has already been done, and the aim of the dogmatist is not to convince a hostile world, but to give intellectual satisfaction to believers through a systematic exposition of the articles of their faith. But this, if it qualifies, does not remove our objection. Such a procedure seems to rest on the very questionable assumption that there is one particular church which is the custodian of Divine truth, while all others are more or less involved in error. And further it overlooks the fact, to which attention will be called presently, that, even if this has been rendered probable by a course of reasoning, the evidence can never be so demonstrative as to exempt the several articles of belief from criticism, and possible rejection, in detail. Thus the mind loses its freedom, and moves from the first within a charmed circle which it can quit only at its peril. The most independent investigation may, no doubt, result in establishing the tenets of some particular school; but when the whole purpose of the work is to expound and defend such tenets, Greek, Roman, or Evangelical, the judgment is committed to foregone conclusions, and has some other aim than pure truth, whatever the evidence may prove that to be. But doctrinal theology has no aim but truth, and therefore seeks to construct its body of doctrine in a perfectly scientific way, and with no fear that it may transgress

<sup>1</sup> Σύστημα Δογματικῆς τῆς ὀρθοδόξου καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας, 1903, pp. 23 sq.

<sup>2</sup> *Encyklopädie u. Methodologie der theologischen Wissenschaften*, ed. 1869, § 79.

<sup>3</sup> *Dogmatik*, 1897, p. 2.



certain limits which have been laid down beforehand, and are protected by penalties. It is of course impossible for any individual to start without some prejudgments; and our investigation necessarily begins with the religion in which we have been brought up, and which is associated with our deepest feelings and convictions. This, in the present instance, is Christianity; but unless we find reason to the contrary, we shall treat Christianity, not as standing in exclusive contrast to all other faiths, but as the highest expression of the religious consciousness of man, and some of our principles will be found applicable, in their degree, to various forms of religion. Our inevitable prejudgments are freely open to the appropriate tests, and there is no presumption of religious faithlessness if, in the course of the inquiry, some of them come to be regarded as unsound.

This agrees with the method which is pursued in all branches of study that are not under the control of some coercive authority. The historian or the astronomer starts with the supposition that there is an assured body of knowledge, or at least of probable hypotheses, which he contentedly accepts till he sees reason for doubting it; and then the legitimate bias with which he started induces him to apply the most rigorous tests, and weigh the evidence with the most scrupulous care, before rejecting what has long been accepted by the most competent judges. Nevertheless, his object is not the maintenance of current views, but historical or scientific truth, and his mind is swayed simply by the internal laws which govern the investigation of truth. Similarly a man may have profound religious convictions, and duly honour the great theologians of the past; and nevertheless in his investigations aim simply at truth, whether or not that should ultimately prove to be in accordance with his present belief. He may walk in the serene light of a holy faith, and yet never be surprised to find that the realms of knowledge are wider than his thought, and the truth of God deeper than he can sound.

In this work, then, we aim at reaching a system of theological doctrine, not at the establishment of given dogmas ; and howsoever the doctrines at which we arrive may come to be classified, the classification will result from the doctrines, and not the doctrines from a prior classification. It is mine to lay before the readers, with as fair a statement and estimate of the evidence as I can command, the results which approve themselves to my own mind ; it is theirs, like merchant-men seeking goodly pearls, to weigh the evidence with caution and impartiality, and aim only at the purest truth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller treatment of my view of the place and method of Doctrinal Theology I may be permitted to refer to section V. of my *Introduction to the Study of Theology*, pp. 165 sqq. I may also quote, as representing a long-cherished principle, the charge which Dr. John Taylor was in the habit of delivering to his pupils at Warrington, and which I sometimes read to my class at Manchester College at the beginning of the doctrinal course, to impress upon them the spirit in which I desired the lectures to be listened to :—

‘ I. I do solemnly charge you, in the name of the God of truth, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and before whose judgment-seat you must in no long time appear, that in all your studies and enquiries of a religious nature, present or future, you do constantly, carefully, impartially, and conscientiously attend to evidence, as it lies in the Holy Scriptures, or in the nature of things and the dictates of reason ; cautiously guarding against the sallies of imagination and the fallacy of ill-grounded conjecture.

‘ II. That you admit, embrace, or assent to no principle or sentiment by me taught or advanced, but only so far as it shall appear to you to be supported and justified by proper evidence from Revelation or the reason of things.

‘ III. That if, at any time hereafter, any principle or sentiment by me taught or advanced, or by you admitted and embraced, shall, upon impartial and faithful examination, appear to you to be dubious or false, you either suspect or totally reject such principle or sentiment.

‘ IV. That you keep your mind always open to evidence ; that you labour to banish from your breast all prejudice, prepossession, and party-zeal ; that you study to live in peace and love with all your fellow-Christians ; and that you steadily assert for yourself, and freely allow to others, the inalienable rights of judgment and conscience.’



# PART I

## SOURCES OF DOCTRINE

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### CHAPTER I

#### DIVISION OF THE SUBJECT

THE primary question in Doctrinal Theology relates to the sources from which our knowledge must be derived, and the method by which we can elicit from these sources the truths of which we are in search. A claim is made on behalf of Christianity that it contains a body of dogmas supernaturally revealed. According to the Protestant position these dogmas are presented, though not in a systematic form, in the Bible, and this collection of writings is the one infallible source from which our religious knowledge must be derived. To this source the Roman and Greek Churches add, as co-ordinate with it, the tradition which has been handed down through authorized channels from the first ; and each claims to be, when speaking through its proper organs and under certain defined conditions, the sole infallible custodian of both Bible and tradition. It will be incumbent on us, therefore, to seek for some conclusions about the Bible and the Church regarded as sources of doctrine.

But prior to any inquiry into the reality and character of an alleged dogmatic revelation must logically come an inquiry into the religious competence of the mind to which the revelation is addressed ; and the results of such an

inquiry must largely affect our whole conception of the authority and value of an historical religion. We are thus led, as preliminary to all theological investigation, to a source of religious doctrine which has been recognized with more or less distinctness by widely divergent schools : namely, the human mind or soul. The authority of this source, up to a certain point, is no less emphatically admitted by John Henry than by Francis Newman. For instance, the belief in the existence of God is drawn by the great advocate of external authority from within rather than without, and in regard to certainty is placed on a par with the belief in his own existence.<sup>1</sup> And indeed most theologians, whether they acknowledge it or not, consult the witness within ; and their conclusions are largely influenced, far more largely than many of them are aware of, by the responses which they elicit. In short, whatever source be formally acknowledged, the mind of the interpreter inevitably colours the interpretation. It is therefore our first duty to bring under consideration the capacity and resources of the mind in its relation to theological doctrine, the method by which its inner witness to Divine truth may be interrogated, and the points where some external assistance might be rendered without any infringement of its laws, or without adding a superfluous confirmation to what is already certain. In this discussion we must necessarily touch on some questions which belong more properly to a philosophical treatise ; but as the end in view is different, the treatment also will be dissimilar. Our necessary limits will permit only the presentation of an outline of thought, which, however, may possibly prove suggestive where it fails to be exhaustive.

<sup>1</sup> *Apologia*, pp. 59, 323, 377.



## CHAPTER II

### THE HUMAN MIND

#### I. The Rights and Limitations of the Intellect

IF there were no external authority entitled to control belief, the mind would have the same unlimited right of investigation as in all other subjects. But when a claim is set up on behalf of an infallible dogmatic revelation, it is often said that the right of question and criticism ceases as soon as the genuineness of the revelation is proved. Free inquiry is proper up to that point, but there it is destroyed by its own success ; just as, on a journey, inquiry might enable us to secure the services of a trustworthy guide, but, when we had secured them, we should trust him implicitly, and never venture to call his judgment in question. It is, I suppose, for this reason that the treatment of evidences is so generally separated from that of doctrine. Let us assume, according to the older Protestant view, that it has pleased God to give to mankind infallible scriptures, containing, among other things, various doctrinal statements. In this case it might seem to be the logical order to prove, first of all, the reality of this divinely authorized document, and then, in the construction of a system of doctrine, to confine oneself to classification and interpretation, without seeking for further proof of the separate items of doctrine. The Divine authority being certified by rational methods, reason must not doubt in detail what it has accepted in the mass. This position appears to be untenable for the following reasons :—

1. The infallibility of the revelation confessedly can be established only by a process of reasoning from more or less certain data. Such a process may establish a very high degree of probability, but can never amount to absolute demonstration; and accordingly there is no authority which, by the completeness of its proof, commands universal assent. You therefore accept the revelation by an act of private judgment; and if you lay it down that this judgment can never, in any circumstances, be subject to reconsideration, you are really attributing infallibility to yourself, so far as relates to that particular conclusion.

2. A large part of the evidence depends on the contents of the revelation; for though these could not prove that the authority appealed to was infallible, they might afford clear evidence of the contrary. If in the Bible, for instance, there were not one statement inconsistent with any other, this would furnish indeed a corroboration of a previous proof; but one clear contradiction would disprove its infallibility, and show that there was something wrong in the reasoning which led to such a conclusion. And again, each statement of the authority can have no more weight, by virtue of its being there, than the amount of probability by which the whole is guaranteed; and therefore if other tests of its correctness are at hand, they ought to be applied. If these tests confirm it, it will be more certain than the general body of the revelation; if they are against it, its probability will be diminished; and it is possible that its improbability on these grounds may exceed its probability from being supported by the accepted authority. It is thus conceivable that a very strong proof in favour of the authority might be completely demolished by the improbabilities affecting the contents in detail.

Instances which may serve to illustrate this reasoning are furnished by extra-Biblical testimonies to events recorded in the Gospels. These testimonies are justly regarded as confirming the truth of the Christian histories; and events



thus attested are more certain than they would be if related nowhere but in the evangelical records. We may have, for example, a more absolute assurance that Christ was crucified by the sanction of Pontius Pilate than we can justly claim for many of the minor details of his biography. An obvious example of the force of counter-evidence is furnished by the question of the antiquity of man. As long as the Bible contained the only record which seemed to give any clear evidence upon the subject it was only reasonable to confine the estimate of the duration of man upon earth within Biblical limits. But as soon as geology unfolded its page, it had a right to be heard, and its evidence became with rational men an important element in testing the infallibility of the Bible. In proportion as it lent sanction to a far higher antiquity for the human race than can be gathered from the Biblical account the probability of the correctness of the ancient narrative in Genesis diminished; and at last the cumulative proof afforded by science, confirmed as it has been by archæological discoveries, has become so strong that no competent judge, I suppose, would hesitate in pronouncing the weight of probability almost overwhelming against the scientific accuracy of the Biblical narrative.

The conclusion to which we are thus led does not, however, represent the human mind as the absolute judge of every separate article of a revelation. There might be doctrines lying entirely beyond the range of our faculties; and we ought, if the authority be rendered probable, to accept on its bare statement propositions which we could neither prove nor disprove on independent grounds. For the particular doctrines, though by themselves destitute of evidence, would be supported by the evidence which established the revelation as a whole.

We may conveniently sum up the foregoing principles in the following proposition:—The human mind has an inalienable right to investigate subjects on which it is



possible that thought or research may throw some light, and no authority of a real or pretended revelation can deprive it of this right; but, on the other hand, it is not justified in rejecting a doctrine *solely* on the ground that it is above the unaided power of human reason to ascertain.

In accordance with this rule it will be our duty, whatever may be our sources, to examine, on its own merits, each doctrine that comes before us, and not confine ourselves to an exposition of any authoritative system.

We must now ask whether in considering the problems of what is generally described as natural religion any restraint is to be placed on the exercise of the rational and critical powers. In this connexion we may observe two different kinds of temperament, which we may call the rationalistic and the spiritual. The former is predominantly critical and negative, and its positive convictions are founded upon observation and reasoning. The latter spontaneously embraces grand spiritual ideas, which seem to carry their own justification, and is impatient with any criticism that can disturb the serenity of its faith. Both of these have their place in theological inquiry. Theological questions may be divided into intellectual and spiritual. The former must submit their claims unreservedly to the decision of knowledge and reason, and must not pretend to any *a priori* certainty on account of their association with the latter. The authorship of a book, for instance, must be ascertained by purely literary methods, and can in no wise reveal itself even to the highest spiritual exaltation. The humility of prayer can no more disclose to us past events than our musical taste can give us a knowledge of Hebrew. But, on the other hand, the grand spiritual relations which bind man to a higher world, the spiritual laws which ought to govern his conduct, the loveliness of duty, the dignity of faith, the honour of self-sacrifice, the exaltation of the lowly, the immortality of virtue, the holiness and love of God, invariably hide themselves from our criticism, while they



disclose themselves to our devout contemplation. Here the intellect must accept the data which are supplied by the religious consciousness,<sup>1</sup> and its function is to draw forth these data, and give them rational expression. This distinction is sufficiently plain, and ought to be carefully observed. But many questions are of a mixed kind, and require an intimate co-working of intellectual and spiritual faculty; for instance, the relation in which Christ stands to the human race necessarily rests on an historical basis; and the historical method by itself, if the soul was dead to certain Christian experiences, might lead us astray. So also, in the interpretation of sacred writings it is imperative to consider the strict grammatical sense of the words; yet no one who has not a living communion with the spirit of the writer can be a sound interpreter. Devotion and acumen, insight and observation, reverence and logic must go hand in hand, and each contribute its own special offering to the temple of truth.

If these observations be correct, we may lay down the following canon for the use of the intellect in religious questions:—It has an inalienable right (*a*) to investigate all questions of outward fact; (*b*) to consider whether the statement of a doctrine is logically self-consistent, and whether it is consistent with knowledge derived from other fields of inquiry; (*c*) to draw inferences from a doctrine, and compare the conclusion thus arrived at with conclusions drawn from other sources.

On the other hand, we may easily deduce the danger attending a one-sided intellectualism. Cardinal Newman speaks of the ‘all-corroding, all-dissolving scepticism of the intellect in religious inquiries.’<sup>2</sup> This, however, is hardly true of the intellect as such, though it may have some application to the rationalistic temperament. The intellect

<sup>1</sup> This position, however, must itself be rationally justified, and we shall attempt its justification further on.

<sup>2</sup> *Apologia pro Vita sua*, p. 379.

can only work upon the data supplied to it. If, then, it derives all its data from the senses, while it is blind to the data furnished by religious experience, it must necessarily tend towards negative results in religion ; and as men are generally far prouder of their defects than of their gifts, it may lead to an arid conceit, than which nothing is more injurious to the perception of religious truth. To one who is in this state of mind the higher reaches of the human mind are simply unknown ; and his arrogant assumption of superiority to vulgar superstition proves nothing but the limitation of his own faculties. The quality of men's judgment of probability depends upon their entire character ; and where the nobler moral and spiritual endowments are lacking, the keenest intelligence may go fatally astray, especially in questions affecting the deeper issues of human life.

## 2. The Moral Nature and Revelation

From the intellectual we pass to the moral nature of man. This subject as a whole must be left to treatises on ethical philosophy ; but a few remarks are necessary here. The consideration of the moral nature enters into theology because there are some religious doctrines, such as that God reveals his will in the human soul, which find in ethics their strongest support ; there are others, such as the doctrines of sin, accountability, and redemption, which relate directly to our moral condition ; and, when a claim is made on behalf of revelation, even when the assumption of accuracy in matters of physical science is abandoned, moral precepts are usually regarded as an express portion of the revelation. The theologian, therefore, must have some clear notion of the nature and limits of the witness which the moral nature affords.

Assuming, then, the results of ethical philosophy, I subjoin a few observations immediately connected with our subject.

We can have no higher motive or impulse to action than is given to us. We may cherish motives, or employ means



by which they may be stimulated, and to some extent we may diminish their power ; but we cannot create them, or so much as form a conception of one till it arises in our experience, any more than one born blind can form a true idea of colour. He who has never loved God cannot *know* love to God, or judge of its ethical value. This consideration has an important bearing on the doctrine of grace.

Revelation might fulfil one of three offices in relation to ethics :—

1. A number of rules might be authoritatively laid down to guide men in their conduct before the knowledge of higher motives was awakened in their minds. If the authority of these rules were sufficiently established, they would be binding as a mere outward law, written on ‘ tables of stone,’ until the inward principles of which the rules were an expression arose in the mind. But thenceforward conscience would be the supreme judge of the value of the rules ; for no outward authority can rest its claims on the same direct evidence as the verdicts of conscience. Thus we rise above the external law, and pass from a legal into a spiritual religion.

A simple illustration may make this clearer. It is recorded that Christ said, ‘ Give to every one that asketh thee,’<sup>1</sup> and ‘ Sell that ye have, and give alms.’<sup>2</sup> If we suppose it to be demonstrated that indiscriminate alms-giving does harm, and not good, we should break these commandments in spirit by keeping them in the letter. Christianity is, I believe, a religion of the spirit, and Christ’s commandments are frequently bold illustrations of the principles which should guide our conduct. For instance, he did not intend his disciples literally to cut off an offending hand and pluck out an offending eye, but to incur loss even of what is very precious rather than yield to a sinful impulse. So it is no explaining away of his meaning if we enlarge the above precepts into a commandment to follow the promptings of

<sup>1</sup> Luke vi. 30.      <sup>2</sup> Luke xii. 33.

love in accordance with known conditions ; not to be selfish, but kind and sympathetic, and ready to deny ourselves and give, when we have reason to believe that our giving will result in good. Thus when the principle of love is established in our hearts, we become, as I think Christ intended us to become, independent of the precept. We have passed from the state of servants to that of sons, and become emancipated even from a law which is 'holy and just and good,' not by release from its obligations, but by finding its spirit within our own souls. But supposing that the inward perception were found to be opposed to the outward authority, that the former prohibited in the clearest and most positive tones what the latter enjoined, which ought we then to obey ? I unhesitatingly reply, the former. The outward evidence of the revelation is now opposed to the testimony of conscience, and this testimony may so preponderate as to make a vast array of scholarly arguments kick the beam in our judicial balance. This is what all men feel whenever their own conscience is brought into collision with any other authority that may compete with it. The most cherished reverence, the most imposing sanctions of learning and power sink before the plain decision of conscience. There may be a severe struggle ; but when once conscience has spoken in firm and unalterable tones, it becomes for each man the supreme authority. This is not only conceded, but enforced, by Cardinal Newman in his splendid description of conscience.<sup>1</sup> It is never in their own case, but only in the case of others, that men dispute this truth. If, then, our conscience resolutely and clearly pronounces against any precept of a supposed revelation, we must either disown the revelation, or, perhaps more wisely, alter our theory of it, and learn to acknowledge its value, without demanding its infallibility.

<sup>1</sup> *A Letter addressed to his Grace the Duke of Norfolk on the occasion of Mr. Gladstone's recent Expostulation*, 1875, pp. 55 sqq.



2. A revelation might enjoin some particular way of acting in conformity with any single motive already existing. It might, for instance, not only direct men to be charitable, but command them to found hospitals; not only to be just, but not to bear false witness. It might also prescribe the ceremonies by which our reverence towards God should be manifested, or by which our religious life should be cultivated. Without revelation men would adopt the ceremonies which taste or experience seemed to render desirable; with it, they would seek to express the same sentiment by careful attention to the ordained routine. The claim on behalf of revelation has been very generally directed to this special subject; and observances, which, from the natural point of view, are morally indifferent have been, through this claim, invested with the highest moral sanction. How, then, is the evidence of revelation in this matter affected by the testimony of our moral nature? Let us suppose an alleged revelation, which enforces the observance of a particular ritual, to be apparently well established. So long as the required ritual affords an easy and complete expression of our religious feeling, no difficulty will arise, and we shall be more disposed to admire than to doubt the wisdom of the regulations. But if the time arrive when our sentiments can no longer find satisfaction in these usages, if our observance become the cold submission or narrow dread of formalism, and our reverence imperiously demand some more natural method of expression, and if in consequence the authoritative retention of the old ritual begin to minister to superstition rather than to morals, a doubt will arise whether the revelation can be genuine, or at least whether that particular part of it can be of everlasting obligation. It is impossible to construct a scale by which to estimate the legitimate force of this doubt; but it presents a counter-evidence, which ought to be carefully weighed; and it may become so strong as to bear down all evidence that can be advanced on the other side. A



noble and cultured reverence would not naturally express itself by sticking hooks under the arm-pits, and indulging in an agonizing swing ; and any pretended revelation, whose principal object was to insist upon observances of this kind, would carry in itself a refutation of its claims. Perhaps it may fairly be added that the natural tendency to vary the expression of the religious motives according to national or individual temperament, and according to the degree of culture, ought to induce us to scan very narrowly the evidence of any supposed revelation which would tie men down to the performance of any particular set of ceremonies ; for, independently of all other evidence, it seems more worthy of Divine wisdom to leave men at liberty in this respect, and it is difficult to believe that the genuine expression of love and reverence, however rude, is not more acceptable to God, as it is unquestionably of higher moral value, than the celebration of the most splendid ritual in simple obedience to authority. How far these considerations will apply in any special case it is not our present purpose to inquire. They are illustrated, however, by the transition from Judaism to Christianity, much in the Jewish ceremonial having become abhorrent to a more refined spirituality. Thus the theory arose that revelation might serve a partial and temporary purpose, and mark a particular stage in the religious education of mankind.

3. Higher motives than we have yet experienced, but of which we are capable, might be made known. They could not be made known by a verbal description, any more than music could be explained to one born deaf. But the exhibition of their working in human life has a tendency to awaken them in ourselves. We have a susceptibility for understanding in others phases of emotion which would not arise spontaneously within us, and through a wonderful sympathetic action the deeper life of some great soul may disclose itself in our hearts. Sometimes a whole new set of emotions starts into waking energy because we have seen the signs of their action in



more elevated minds than our own. A revelation made in this way would depend on the susceptibility of the minds to which it was presented. The new motive brought before us might be so much higher than anything we are yet capable of that for a long time we should only gaze at it in blank wonder, as a little child knows not why its parents bow their heads in prayer; or it might be so near us as in an instant to kindle our waiting hearts. Some, again, are naturally much more susceptible of this sympathetic influence than others. The same manifestations of high motives would accordingly be full of meaning to one, and hardly intelligible to another; and while one gazes with stolid indifference upon the grandest act in history, another will melt into tears of thankful joy for the new depths of life that have been broken open in his heart. The question of evidence does not appear to enter into this kind of revelation. It is the dawning of a new light in the consciousness, or it is nothing; and accordingly it claims no outward authority, and it appeals for its credentials to the awakened souls of men. Nevertheless, since it is essentially a taking away of a veil from the heart, it may, with far more propriety than the modes which we have previously considered, assume the name of revelation. Whether any revelation of this kind has been given at all more special than the daily revelations which are made through the relations of parent and child, teacher and taught, and others which arise in the constant interchange of mind with mind, is a subject for future inquiry.

These remarks might arouse an expectation that a scheme of duties should be presented as part of our system. Religious life involves not only a certain mode of thinking, but a certain mode of acting. Hence some writers would include Christian Ethics within the field of Dogmatics. But, though springing from the same stem, they are two distinct branches, and therefore lend themselves to separate treatment. Accordingly ethical considerations will come in only where they are



distinctly implicated with doctrines, and we shall not enter upon the manifold details of Christian duty.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. The Religious Element

We have now to inquire into the nature of the religious element in man. Most men who have reflected much upon theological subjects will admit that there is something which affects religious belief besides the mere logical evidence. This appears from the great diversity of belief, where the same evidence is open to all; from the different ways in which the same evidence affects us under different circumstances; and from the connexion which is often apparent between a man's natural tendencies and the line of thought which he adopts in his theology. There is some hidden power which gives us an affinity with certain kinds of evidence and with certain directions of thought, and which thereby is largely instrumental in determining our belief. What is this power? Does it constitute a portion of our finished human nature, or does it belong only to its weakness and perversion? If it be, like the intellect, an essential part of our nature, what are its laws? What are its defects, and its sources of error? By what method may it be made available for the discovery or the establishment of truth? These are the questions to which we have now to address ourselves, questions at once of high importance and of great difficulty.

#### (a) *The Existence of the Religious Element*

Proceeding to our task, we may lay down as the basis of our discussion the following proposition:—There is in man a primitive religious element. By this expression I do not, of course, mean that there is a particular and separable faculty of religion, but that there are certain manifestations

<sup>1</sup> See the propriety of separating Dogmatics and Ethics ably defended by Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, translated by Professor Cave, vol. I. Introduction, § 4, pp. 24 sqq.



of human nature which we distinguish as religious, just as there are others which we distinguish as intellectual or moral.

It may be asked here, what is meant by religious? I must reply at present that the word is sufficiently understood for our immediate purpose, and that any attempt to define religion at this stage of the inquiry would prejudice many important questions. There are certain phenomena of which we are conscious in ourselves, such as devoutness; and there are things which we observe in society, such as the existence of churches and public assemblies for worship, which indicate the presence of similar conceptions or feelings in the minds of our fellow-men; and to these phenomena, from their possession of similar characteristics, we give the one name, religious. Every one who has had any religious experience distinguishes in his consciousness the religious element from others, such as the social or the intellectual.

From these remarks it is apparent that the word religion is here used to denote the inward quality of a religious man; and it is necessary to bear this in mind, because religion is an ambiguous term, and is constantly applied to the institutions, whether of ceremony or of dogma, through which the religious life of a people is expressed, as when we speak of the Jewish or the Mohammedan religion. When the term is understood as referring to an inward quality, to that which is often spoken of as 'the religious consciousness,' I may venture to point out that religion, as a natural object, cannot be defined in the sense in which we define a triangle or a square. The definitions of these figures contain implicitly the whole of their properties, which are discovered and made explicit by a rigorous deduction. But we can obtain a complete knowledge of any natural object only by a careful induction; and if we start with a philosophical or dogmatic definition of religion, we inevitably commit ourselves to a one-sided view, and to a probable misinterpretation of important facts. That this is so is

proved by the great number of definitions, some of them absolutely contradictory, which have been given of religion, and which have imparted such various colours to the religious views of their authors. For instance, Schleiermacher's celebrated definition of religion as a feeling of absolute dependence is the expression of a deeply devotional nature, and tends, in speculation, towards a system of pantheistic mysticism. Newman's declaration that 'the essence of all religion is authority and obedience,'<sup>1</sup> expresses his need of external direction, and conducts him to the conclusion that the essence of revealed religion is 'the supremacy of Apostle, or Pope, or Church, or Bishop.' Theodore Parker's proposition that 'Religion is voluntary obedience to the law of God'<sup>2</sup> exhibits the commanding moral nature of the man, and, with a consistent thinker, would impart a strongly ethical colour to his theology. But religion, as something in our natural constitution, is too rich and complex to be shut up within narrow definitions. All that we can do in relation to natural objects is to describe them, so that they may be recognized, by some salient and common features; and this is what Professor Max Müller really does when he seeks to define religion through a consideration of its historical origin. He says, 'Anything that lifts a man above the realities of this material life is religion,' or, defining it more precisely, 'Religion consists in the perception of the infinite under such manifestations as are able to influence the moral character of man.' By the infinite he means the something unseen, and unlimited in thought, which we postulate behind and beyond what we perceive by the senses.<sup>3</sup> It is clear that we could not deduce all the rich contents of religion from this definition; and, though it is extremely interesting, it hardly gives us even a new power

<sup>1</sup> *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> *Discourse of Matters pertaining to Religion*, p. 24, Miss Cobbe's edition.

<sup>3</sup> *Gifford Lectures, Natural Religion*, Lecture V, and pp. 168, 188 sq., 568.



of recognizing religion.<sup>1</sup> But the religious man knows the religious mood, though he cannot define it, even as one may be entranced with beauty, though he is unable to say what beauty is.

In describing this element as primitive I do not mean that we can trace its action in either a baby or a wild boy, but simply that it belongs to our complete nature, just as truly as sensation or thought. It may require stimulants to awaken it, or culture for its development; but, if our proposition be true, the stimulants and the culture do not create it, any more than schools create our intellect, or comedies our sense of humour. That religion thus forms a constituent portion of our nature, and is not one of its transient phases, is shown by the following evidence:—

I. We are conscious in ourselves of feelings or sentiments of a kind so marked and peculiar that we find it necessary to call them by a distinctive name, religious; and we are unable to analyse these into any others which are non-religious. We may possibly remember the occasion on which we were first clearly conscious of them; but why they assumed this particular form we are unable to explain, except by saying that such is an ultimate law of our nature. Thus an examination of our own consciousness leads us to the conclusion that the religious element is primitive. This reasoning may be illustrated by a parallel argument in regard to the social affections. These arise on occasion of our intercourse with human beings; but unless they belonged to our nature as one of its primitive endowments, they would not arise at all. Men might mingle with one another, and be useful to one another, without any social feeling; and we should then experience no pain at parting, and solitary confinement would cease to be the terrible punishment that it is, because it would no longer be the denial of gratifica-

<sup>1</sup> See also some useful remarks in Professor James's *Gifford Lectures, The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 26.



tion to a strong natural tendency. We may venture to ask whether our belief in the consciousness of other men, which is completely outside the range of strict scientific proof, is not at least partly due to this irresistible social impulse. So in regard to the religious feelings, under whatever circumstances they may arise, they do so only because our nature has been so constituted that they make their appearance, rather than no feelings or feelings of a totally different order. We must therefore simply accept them, with all that they involve, as ultimate facts in our nature.

2. This religious element is no private possession of our own, but is so nearly universal that we are justified in treating one who is totally without it as an incomplete man. The validity of this statement depends on the width and variety of our induction. Religion manifests itself in all, or, if there be a few doubtful cases of savage tribes,<sup>1</sup> in almost all nations with which we are acquainted; and it has done so from the earliest times of which we possess information. It presents itself in shapes so various that they appear mutually to exclude one another; and yet there is such an internal unity that by common consent we give them the same name, religion. In short, that man, with all his faults, is a religious creature is one of the great dominant facts of history. If any man will reflect upon these facts, and picture to himself the prevalence of some kind of worship in every known period of the world's history, in nations the most unlike one another, the most remote from common influences, and pursuing the most divergent lines of civilization or of barbarism, he can hardly fail to admit that religion is laid deep in the foundations of human nature.

<sup>1</sup> For the genuine religiousness of low savages see *The Making of Religion*, by Andrew Lang, 1898, especially chapter X. Also Max Müller's *Gifford Lectures, Natural Religion*, 1888, p. 85. The latter maintains 'that there is no trustworthy evidence whatsoever to support' the theory that there are tribes without religion. He relies especially on the researches of Roskoff, *Religionswesen der rohesten Naturvölker*, 1880. See his *Anthropological Religion*, pp. 171 sqq.



There are, however, three ways in which the force of this argument might conceivably be evaded ; and although two of these have probably few adherents at the present day, they must be included in our brief notice, and a reference to them may help to clear our thought upon the whole question.

(a) Religion may be the invention of powerful and ambitious men, and employed as a useful engine to keep the multitude in subjection. But the very idea of employing such an engine, and the world-wide success which it has attained, would conclusively show, not that human nature is without religion, but that it has a strong tendency towards it. Ambitious and unprincipled men do not bend others to their purposes by ignoring their natural tendencies, but by taking advantage of them. Men who, unconscious of religion in themselves, believe it to be necessary for women and the multitude, acknowledge, while they despise, its existence in human nature. If there were no such thing as regard for self-interest, no bribes would be offered ; and none would play upon the religious susceptibilities of the people, if such susceptibilities did not exist. Whatever we may think of the value of a priesthood, the extensive authority wielded by priests proves the consciousness of religious want in the human heart. Or the argument may be put in another way. If it be thought possible that men, apart from any natural tendency to believe, at once acquiesce in the opinion of the powerful, yet the following objection is fatal to the hypothesis we are considering. Powerful men, by inventing the existence of invisible divine or satanic beings, might produce terror, and, having secured in this way submission to their authority, cause many of the outward practices of religion to be observed ; but they never could create any of those feelings which are distinctively religious. No threats, no entreaties, no descriptions, could create the feeling of devotion ; they could not even awaken it unless it were slumbering within as an integral portion of human



nature. To take a parallel instance :—if compassion were no part of our nature, waiting only for appropriate occasions to call it into action, we might be surrounded by all the piteous sights of earth and hell, and yet our hearts would be as unmoved as stone. Such sights awaken compassion, but cannot create it. This argument must, of course, be drawn primarily from our own consciousness, where alone we can learn the nature of devout feeling, and is thus a return to the consideration presented under the first head ; but it is confirmed by what we learn of the consciousness of others through personal intercourse and through literature. Men animated by religious feeling are persuaded that that feeling lies far deeper than the artifices of ambition, and has a higher lineage than the craft of statesmen ; and who, with any tact of sympathy, could read, for instance, the fifty-first Psalm without owning its origin in sentiments which were distinctively religious, and could not be created by the will of any despot or priest ?

(*b*) It is conceivable that the religious phenomena of the world may be due to traditional beliefs, which, whatever their origin may have been, arose in primitive times, and have thus become the common heritage of our race. Hence a doubt forces itself upon us in such a form as this : Is our soul's desire for God, are our religious sentiments, which seem the very crown and glory of our nature, nothing more than the rude propulsion of transmitted prejudice ? That the religious element is subject to the law of hereditary transmission will hardly admit of question. The feelings of the parent reappear in the son or daughter. The earliest images of awe were wrought upon the susceptible mind of our opening years, and many a belief may be traced back to the nursery. Has our religion, then, any higher source ? Is it not to be flung off as a morbid growth, sprung from the weedy soil of descent and education ? And when the deep, full heart of manhood ' thirsteth for God, for the living God,' is its supplication



anything more than an imbecile cry for the vanished dream of childhood? <sup>1</sup>

The following considerations may help us to answer these questions :—

(1) Admitting to the fullest extent the development of religion in our nature, and the dependence of its form upon the thoughts presented by the intellect, still that only can be developed and shaped which already exists at least in germ. If there had been no susceptibility to religious impression in the primitive constitution of our nature, all the objects, real or ideal, by which religious sentiment lives, would have been exhibited in vain, and would have elicited no more response than Mozart's Requiem from an angry lion. But if we admit a susceptibility, there must have been an internal law of our being which helped to determine the course of future development. Outward forces can only take up and mould what is given in our original constitution ; and however our feelings may wait upon our opinions, still it is due to internal forces alone that on the presentation of certain objects the feelings assume this form rather than that. Given this original susceptibility, with its internal law, without which all development is impossible, then much may have to be ascribed to the varying influences with which it is brought into contact, and there may be diseased as well as healthy growth ; but a primitive religious element there must have been, or all the thoughts of the wise or of the foolish could no more fashion us, even in millions of years, into beings with religious feelings than an army of skilful joiners could manufacture an oak out of an elephant.

(2) In confirmation of the conclusion thus reached we may

<sup>1</sup> Max Müller cites Professor Gruppe, in his *Die Griechischen Culte und Mythen*, 1887, as the most powerful representative of the view that religion is a disease, the rapid spread of which all over the world is due to a 'social instinct which is supposed to be gratified by certain advantages which all religions provide,' and which was originally invented by a single individual! *Gifford Lectures, Natural Religion*, pp. 74 sqq., 187.



appeal to our present judgment of the nature and value of religious motives. Does this judgment regard them as intruders upon a nature which would be better without them ? Does it seem to us that we should be more truly human than we are if we could banish them, with ghosts, to the limbo of the past ? Do those men seem to us the most admirable who are the most destitute of them ? Or, if we admit their worth, do they seem like something tacked on to a nature otherwise complete ? Do we not, on the contrary, recognize them as the finished beauty of our nature, imparting fulness and harmony to that which, without them, would seem defective ? No man who has them can view them either as alien to his nature, or as constituting one of its diseased formations ; and we must remember that he who has them not is no judge in the case ; for knowing them only as outward phenomena, he has not in his consciousness the very elements on which a judgment must be based.

(3) It does not seem likely that if the existence of religious feeling depended on what we may term the accidents of transmission, its manifestations would be so universal and persistent. If it be an original element in our nature, then its transmission, however mysterious, is to be classed with that of our bodily form and other recognized human attributes. But if it had no existence until it was deposited in the mind under the influence of imagination or thought, and then, having once established its hold, been handed down to posterity like national or family antipathies, we should expect it to be local and partial in its action, and the bias towards it in one country to be counteracted by the bias against it in another. We should also expect to observe in human nature a tendency to throw off this extraneous product, as being really foreign to its true constitution ; but so far from noticing any such tendency, we observe a persistent struggle in religion towards fuller and more beautiful life. The phenomena presented by history are those of growth. Here religion blooms into richest fruit ;



there it clothes itself in a lovely, but barren foliage ; there, as in an ungenial soil, it is stunted and bare. If these phenomena do not spring from the roots of our common nature, then the religious leaning must have been given to mankind before the division into tribes and nations ; and to maintain that this foreign ingredient can have been transmitted unimpaired through all these ages, and that the holiness of Christ was only the cultivated excrescence of a primeval savage, is, to say the least, to attach oneself to an absolutely groundless hypothesis.

(4) There have been periods when considerable portions of mankind appear to have thrown off the religious element ; but, as we should expect, if it belongs to our nature, it has returned with augmented force, or, while it has been driven from its accustomed resorts, it has sought abnormal means of gratification. Under the Roman empire, in its early period, many men fancied they had outgrown religion. The serious thought or the light sarcasm of the philosopher, and the gradual spread of enlightenment, had created a widely felt scepticism ; and luxury, self-indulgence, and, in general, devotion to the pursuits of a worldly life, had poisoned the fountains of religious sentiment. But religion was not dead. It filled the sceptical mind with a strange credulity, and exposed it to the artifices of a tribe of religious pretenders, who claimed to interpret the mysteries of fate or to direct the course of providence. In some minds also religion lived, though not under its familiar name, but as a secret worship of ideal righteousness and unperverted truth. And it was at this time, when the religious forces of our being seemed weak with the decrepitude of age, that Christianity appeared, and was welcomed by the human heart as a true answer to its indestructible wants. Things which do not belong to our nature, when once slain, revive no more ; but as often as religion is crucified and buried, it returns in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.

The above reasoning may perhaps appear in a clearer light



if we notice a fact which might be urged by way of objection, namely, that there are transmitted religious prejudices, and religious feelings which can be regarded only as a morbid growth. The pious horror with which sects look upon one another, the fear of doing certain things on certain days as being unlucky or impious, are of this kind. But then they fail in the characteristics by which the religious element is distinguished as a whole. However widely spread, and however long-lived, still, in relation to the race, they are partial and transient, the changeful modes of that which is universal and permanent. And the fact that the religious element has such varied forms of manifestation, from the most childish to the most sublime, and that it persistently survives the demolition of so many false ideas and so many prejudices, only makes the more impressive its own imperishable force, and throws us irresistibly back upon the conclusion that it belongs to the original constitution of our nature.

(c) It may be maintained that religious knowledge is derived by inference from other knowledge, and that this inference follows so obviously from the observation of ordinary phenomena that it has been made in all ages of the world, and thus the universality of religion is explained without supposing that there is any separate provision for it in our nature. Substantially the same reply must be given to this as to the other two hypotheses. It may be quite true that the belief in the existence of God has been generally awakened in the minds of men by the contemplation of the phenomena around them. But religion is more than knowledge. Whatever view we may adopt of its nature and constitution, it certainly includes a certain class of emotions ; and knowledge never can create these emotions, but at most call them into activity. Prove that God exists, and still if there be no portion of our nature turned, as it were, towards God, we should not be religious. The existence of God may be accepted simply as a fact, like any other fact ;



a scientific explanation of the ultimate ground of the universe, and nothing more. In this way we may conceivably know the existence of God, and mark the traces of his wisdom and benevolence, and yet not be attached to him by a solitary thread of religious feeling. Unless devotion be hidden in our nature, no clearness of scientific theology will ever bring it to light. Thus we may admit to the fullest extent the readiness with which a theological explanation of the universe presents itself in human thought, and yet not concede that that will account for the religious emotion which has imprinted itself so indelibly in the history of the world.

All attempts, then, to explain from the action of external causes the almost universal presence of religion in the human mind fail, because they give really no account of those irresolvable elements of feeling which we call religious.

3. There are some impressive phenomena, confirmatory of our previous conclusion, which require notice, as they may help to obviate an objection which will seem forcible to some minds. How many are there, even of the professedly religious, who seem to have little or no actual religion, but in whom it is rather a deference to the opinion of others than anything arising spontaneously in their own minds. There may be more in that word *seem* than the objectors are inclined to think. Many *have* more religion than they *seem* to have, more perhaps than they themselves know. In the privacy of intimate friendship, sometimes, in exceptional circumstances, the unmistakable tones of religion break forth, showing that in them too it 'is not dead but sleeps.' The pursuits of the world in general hide their religion; but when they are crushed under some great sorrow, or stretched upon the bed where all the things of this world lose their interest, the soul begins to speak its native language. The decay of the body, the dropping away of all the entanglements of earth and time, exhibit the soul actually there, and are the beginning of its resurrection. So too an illness which is not unto death often discloses the

dormant power, and prayer and praise break even from untutored lips with a strange and beautiful sweetness. Among those, again, who seem through their own wickedness to have exterminated the religious principle, it is not really gone. Examine their terror at death, and you will find that its sting is sin and the awful world beyond. These testimonies are the more valuable because they are unasked, and given apparently against the natural bias of the persons affording them. Referred to in a written statement they may not seem so precious as they really are ; but in personal experience nothing is more impressive than the revelation of a soul which seldom displays itself, but breaks out at last by an involuntary impulse in the language of religion.

(b) *The Religious Element points to an Object or Objects answering to it*

In entering upon the inquiry suggested by the above heading it is necessary to say that throughout the whole of this portion of our investigation, I by no means assume that the religious element is the only channel by which we can approach religious objects. But all other channels are outside our present purpose. Our task now is to determine how far the religious element is an independent evidence of theological truth, by what modes it may be interrogated, and to what extent its testimony is to be trusted in confirming or modifying conclusions derived from other sources, or in directing us when no other evidence is available. This must be carefully borne in mind, if we would estimate fairly the character and value of this source of evidence.

Coming, then, to our investigation, we have to ask whether the existence of the religious element is a barren fact, or on the contrary points to any other facts beyond itself. In order that we may proceed with the greatest care, I would lay down the simplest proposition upon this subject :—The existence of the religious element is an evidence of the existence of an object or objects answering to it.



The religious feelings do not terminate in themselves, but exist only in relation to an object, real or imaginary. Our feelings may be divided into those which terminate in themselves and those which are relative to some object. The feelings of warmth and of comfort do not require any object, and so do not necessarily carry our thoughts beyond ourselves. They, no doubt, like other phenomena, presuppose a cause; but considered simply as feelings, they might arise in us if we were, and believed ourselves to be, the only beings in existence. But this is not the case with such feelings as resentment and gratitude. These immediately suggest the existence of certain objects, objects moreover of a peculiar character, namely, persons who have inflicted an injury or conferred a benefit upon us; and without the existence of these objects the feelings would have no justification. Now, the religious feelings belong to the second of these two classes. The feeling of wonder implies something wonderful; that of veneration, something venerable; and the sentiments which we denote under the word worship rest upon something which we believe entitled to be worshipped. Accordingly every form of religion presents us with an object or objects, the denial of which is, for the time being, a denial of the legitimacy of the religious feeling.

We must now go a step further, and observe that the religious feelings tend to create a belief in the existence of their appropriate object, and this tendency is nature's indication of the reality of that object. The fact that the religious feelings have the tendency which is here ascribed to them will hardly be called in question. There are times when doubt is swallowed up in faith, not under the influence of any new evidence addressed to the reason, but simply from the vividness of inward experience. Again, the dissolution of faith is a process of extremest pain, not the pain of a crucified passion, which we endure for the sake of higher moral and intellectual acquisitions, but rather the pain of

a severed life, of an orphaned and desolate heart. Now this pain is due to the imperious demands of the religious sentiments for some object on which they can rest with satisfaction, and their incessant protest against a merely negative result in theological inquiry. The religious element still puts in a plea, and will have it that, though all the forms of young belief may be erroneous, though all the grounds on which faith was supposed to stand may be swept away, still there must be some centre of repose for those emotions and aspirations which are the purest and most lovely in our complex nature. And this same tendency has, again and again, led back the soul, not indeed to the rejected dogmas of childhood, but to modes of belief which are compatible with the intellectual requirements of the time. This tendency to religious belief is surely a significant fact in our nature, and points to some reality corresponding to it.

To this mode of reasoning, however, some objections may be taken. The tendency to create belief is a general law of emotion, and leads often to the grossest delusions; for it is a characteristic of emotion to make itself its own justification, and to drive out of view all opposing considerations. When once a man's anger, for instance, is violently excited, he is quite satisfied that the person against whom it is aroused has deliberately intended to injure him, and he will not listen to arguments that show that the offender's conduct may be viewed in a different light; and yet, were it not for the anger which silences the voice of reason, he might see clearly that no wrong had been designed against him. The religious emotions are not exempt from delusions of this kind. We know that men, under the pressure of religious enthusiasm, have entertained the most preposterous beliefs. Indeed it might even be maintained that no class of emotions has been so prejudicial to the claims of reason and good sense as the religious. How foolish, then, to trust them as any indication of truth. But it may be replied that this argument touches only particular conclusions, and not the main



question. It shows, indeed, that the religious sentiments do not necessarily and directly apprehend the highest truth ; but it does not prove that they are wrong in feeling after some supreme object of devotion, where they would find the assured repose of perfect satisfaction. They may often, through wrong interpretation, blind the judgment, and foster belief in all sorts of absurdities, and still they may prove that we live in a universe where there is some real object of worship. The representation of this object in thought is due to a variety of influences ; and the religious sentiment is generally content with the representation which is provided for it by inheritance and education, and so, by a natural association, regards a denial of this as a destruction of its own life. And again, the known delusions of religious and other feelings are temporary. They may be shared by vast multitudes of men, and last for a great number of years ; but they are not world-wide and permanent phenomena. On the other hand, the tendency to religious faith survives every demonstration of its particular follies ; and it does not seem reasonable to suppose that this great human fact indicates nothing but the persistency of incompetence and delusion, and that faculties apparently the highest and most ennobling within us are absolutely destitute of meaning, and have no justification for their existence in any abiding reality.

Another objection which may occur is this. It may be said that all arguments like that which is here advanced assume the very thing to be proved. If our nature has been formed by an intelligent Creator, then, no doubt, the religious element cannot be there without a purpose ; but if we know nothing of such a Creator, then we have no security that any given faculty may not be constructed on entirely false principles. This is the final argument of scepticism ; and it is difficult to know how to answer it except by refusing to be sceptical, and contenting ourselves with the leading of a nature whose trustworthiness we certainly cannot



demonstrate. For the practical necessities of life we have to accept the laws of our intelligence as in the main to be depended on. If thus to accept them virtually involves belief in God, then it seems wiser to regard this fact as a proof of the Divine existence than to fall back on the utter impossibility of all knowledge. If, however, we have regard, not to theological requirements, but to the order of belief actually existing in the human understanding, I think we must consider our reliance upon the permanent laws of our intelligence as more fundamental than the implied belief in God. In every investigation their trustworthiness is the one thing that we assume, and without it all progress would be impossible. We can only reason from that which is generally admitted to that which is less so ; and if anyone chooses to reply that our nature may be permanently and radically wrong in its construction, I cannot see that there is anything more to be said. But if anyone declines to fall back upon this hypothesis, to him it may be a convincing argument that, if there be an original and permanent provision for religion in our nature, and if the religious sentiments point to some supreme object, and invariably tend to create or keep alive belief in the reality of such object, this is a legitimate evidence of the existence of some object answering to these sentiments.

The conclusion thus arrived at by an examination of the religious element itself receives confirmation when we observe that it accords with the whole analogy of our nature, so far as we have means of verification, to suppose that our permanent endowments are adapted to the realities of the world in which we are placed. Is it unreasonable, then, to carry up this principle into that region where, from the nature of the case, sensible experience can afford us no clue ? Can we believe that the various powers of our nature are marvellously adapted to the world without, and that the highest part alone has no corresponding object, that that central and abiding force within us, which makes a paradise



out of the chaos of passion, which gives to reason its serenest dignity, and imparts to morality at once its sternest might and its tenderest grace, is alone out of harmony with the reality of things, and the widowed soul must clothe itself in weeds, and drop more scalding tears in proportion as its love is fervent and its aspiration high ?

(c) *Testimony of the Religious Element to Doctrines*

The line of reasoning which we have been following is capable of legitimate extension, and we must next endeavour to enunciate a theory corresponding to the facts of the case, and serving as a basis for further investigation.

We may begin by laying down a proposition which can hardly be called in question :—All doctrines which are simply generalized statements of spiritual facts or experiences, provided the induction of such facts or experiences be sufficiently wide, are to be accepted as true. This proposition is important in regard to all that portion of theology which relates to the nature of man, his religious requirements, and the means of his spiritual growth. It points, for instance, to the mode of solving the controversy in regard to the nature and extent of human sin.

The truth of the following proposition is not so immediately evident :—When a doctrine is necessary for the satisfaction of a primitive feeling or tendency of the religious element, that doctrine is to be accepted as true. On the other hand, a doctrine which would render it impossible for such primitive feeling or tendency to receive satisfaction is to be rejected as false. And a doctrine which only partially satisfies such primitive feeling or tendency is to be regarded as an approximation to the truth.

This proposition is an attempt to state in a concise form the actual process of human belief, assuming at the same time the validity of that process. I do not mean that men as a rule deliberately say to themselves, ‘This doctrine satisfies an inward want, and therefore I believe it,’ but only

that they do believe because it satisfies the inward want, though they may themselves be quite unconscious of the process by which the belief is arrived at. It is only when the question is raised whether we have any good grounds for our belief that we begin to trace the process ; and then men speak of a 'verifying faculty,' of truth authenticating itself, or as being its own witness. The proposition seeks to give precise expression to these vague interpretations of our internal experience. Its meaning, and the cautions by which it must be guarded, will be fully brought out in the course of our investigation. The following considerations may be urged in its support :—

1. It follows as a corollary from the proposition which was laid down in regard to the religious element as a whole ; for if the existence of the religious element proves the existence of some object corresponding to it, we must by parity of reasoning admit that every primitive feeling or tendency within that element points to a corresponding truth. To use a figure, if the religious element be a mirror which reflects the image of God, then, if that mirror be complete and pure, it will present a perfect reflection of Divine truth ; but if it be broken and cloudy, it will still indeed reflect the truth, but imperfectly and obscurely.

2. The proposition is supported by the facts of consciousness. Let us consider it in the order of its three members.

In the first place, men accept as true a doctrine which seems necessary to satisfy a primitive religious feeling or tendency. Do we not always, for the time being at least, believe that which, as we say, comes home to us, which awakens a response in our hearts, or fills up some sense of want ? If we have ever the good fortune to hear a sermon or read a book which reaches the depths of the religious nature, does it not seem to touch a chord that else were silent, and to draw forth tones that tell us of a diviner world than that in which we have been living, and do we not express to ourselves our feeling in such words as these,



‘ Yes, it is all real ; how blind I have been, and now I see ; spiritual truth is after all the grandest, deepest truth ; this is exactly what I wanted, the truth which I have long felt after, but never found before ’ ? I believe that the first moment of conscious satisfaction, the inward meeting, as it were, of the want and its object, is always a moment of intense conviction, and that doubt arises only subsequently through the imperfection of the truth, and a consequent want of complete satisfaction, or through the suggestions of others or the difficulties of reason, or, it may be, through an inherent deficiency in the spiritual nature. We may notice also the converse of this fact. Men do not believe in any deep and living sense that which makes no appeal to their inward wants. No man can come to the truth unless the Father draw him. Doctrines may indeed be accepted on authority ; but that doctrine is not *believed*, though it may not be denied, which is utterly inoperative in the life. It lies in the mind as a dead thing ; and not till the soul recognizes the doctrine as an answer to its own earnest cravings is the lifeless assent changed into a kindling faith.

Coming now to the second member of our proposition, we find an equally strong disposition to reject any doctrine which virtually denies the legitimacy of some inward want. This disposition is manifested not only in the inability to receive a new doctrine which runs counter to the religious feelings, and the rejection of which might be due merely to prejudice, but also in the casting off of old beliefs which were supported by all the power of prejudice. It may be that old beliefs are more frequently relinquished under the influence of advancing knowledge, and that the contest is really one between feeling and reason ; but the other case also exists, and perhaps more generally the two methods coincide. The belief in the modern origin of the human race has receded solely before evidence addressed to the understanding ; for it is only through artificial association that it

affects our religious feelings at all. The doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture affords an example of the mixed method. The main advance has been along the line of facts and reasoning ; but, although science has made some addition to the evidence, the facts have been substantially the same all along, and the mind has refused to accept the evidence of facts till it has embraced an idea of inspiration, not less, but more satisfying to the demands of the religious element than that which formerly prevailed. Paul's doctrine, ' the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life,' expresses not so much his more advanced understanding as his larger soul. The rejection of the doctrine of eternal torment is a purer example of the rebellion of the religious heart against a dogma which not only enjoyed the support of prolonged ecclesiastical sanction, but seemed to find an echo in the condemning conscience of the race. Here the rational conditions of the problem are quite unchanged. But it is becoming more and more impossible to accord an entire love to the creator of an eternal hell, and there is no deeper yearning of the soul than to be able to rest in God as worthy of a love which is absolutely without doubt and fear.

The third member of the proposition follows from a combination of the other two. So far as a doctrine satisfies the religious element, it seems to be true ; so far as it opposes its satisfaction, it seems to have an element of error. To take as an example a doctrine mentioned under the last head, that of eternal torment, we speak in common usage as though this doctrine were simply denied by those who do not accept it. But this is not a correct representation of the case. The doctrines of retribution, and of the heinousness of sin, are involved in this dogma ; and these are not impugned. We therefore have an approximation to the truth, something which answers to the sense of ill-desert, but something also which revolts the higher sensibilities. So the contrasted doctrine, if such really exist except in the fancy of controversialists, that the character of God is one



of infinite good-nature, which rests on no moral basis, might give a kind of meagre satisfaction to the devout feeling, but is spurned as insufficient by our deeper moral needs. We may find further illustrations in our own experience. We sometimes are consciously feeling after a truth, beset with some profound emotion or struggling aspiration, the full meaning of which we do not yet know; and at such times we are aware that all our attempts to express this truth are imperfect, and yet we find it good to express as best we can our meaning, and to accept provisionally this representation of the truth, in order that, by holding it in a concrete form, we may make it available for the purposes of memory and thought. Then sometimes in our reading we meet with a passage which illumines, with the splendour of real insight, our dim experience, and we feel that this is what we have long wanted, but been unable, to say. Our own imperfect expressions seem to be approximations to the truth, while the newly discovered passage becomes the formula of our completed doctrine.

The above remarks may suffice to illustrate the internal experiences on which our proposition rests; and we must now review certain objections which readily present themselves.

I. Beliefs which maintain themselves in the manner described may be mere prejudices, and the rule seems to say that we are to believe exactly what we like. Now I think there are certain characteristics which broadly distinguish the beliefs in question from prejudices which result from the accidents of our early training.

(a) They are more persistent. A prejudice is often very difficult to get rid of; but when it has been overcome, there is a feeling of relief, and we seem to have passed from under a dark cloud. But a religious belief which answers to a permanent inward want clings to us; and if, through its defective form, it fall before the attacks of knowledge, it is not flung off as the burden of a cruel superstition, but it

lingers as a memory of beauty, and we long still to catch the tones of its silenced voice. Only on one condition will it depart without leaving behind it the feeling that it has been wronged ; and that is, that it be succeeded by a fairer form of truth, which speaks to us with a more searching appeal.

(b) They tend to recur. Prejudices, which owe their origin to the accidental circumstances of the time, pass away when they have run their course, and appear no more. But those beliefs which have their roots in the abiding wants of the human soul may seem to be killed by the winter of doubt, but their spring-time comes again, and they refuse to die. And even if they have been superseded by some grander type of theology, still they present themselves again as soon as the degenerate mind is unable any longer to sustain itself at the same spiritual elevation. The tendency to a repetition of certain great types of religious faith seems to indicate something deeper than baseless prejudice.

(c) They seem to be higher than our ordinary thoughts, and to make a Divine claim upon us. We can sometimes remember a theological prejudice, and I think the sentiments with which we regarded it were different from those which we entertain towards religious beliefs of a higher order. They had in them a large element of self-complacency. The opinions seemed to be, what they really were, simply our opinions, ours either individually or as belonging to some party with which we were connected ; and we supposed that they did great credit to our enlightenment or to our religious character. Solemn and Divine authority over us, standing in holy and rebuking contrast to our passions and our worldly thoughts, they had none. But it is not so with religious beliefs which have touched the necessities of our souls. They do not seem to be ours, except so far as we may clothe them in our imperfect speech. They have come to us, like voices from a higher world, calling us to a diviner life. They will not be confounded with the drifting currents of opinion,



or the strife of personal or party thoughts ; but they lead us towards the universal and eternal life, claiming our homage as that to which they are entitled, and breathing order and peace on the stormy chaos of our lower nature.

(*d*) Lastly, religious beliefs often come in opposition to the past current of our lives. So far from being prejudices, they begin to wage war against our prejudices. So far from flattering our pride or amusing our tastes, they cast us down in self-abandonment, and call upon us to take up the cross. In certain cases too they are quite original, not borrowing their form from customary phrases, but shaping themselves in the awakened soul as the germs of a new theology. These facts are quite inconsistent with the notion that religious beliefs, of the kind in question, are to be classed with our prejudices ; and the various considerations here urged appear to show that they have a higher source than any accidents of culture, and that they must be regarded as at least pointing towards some truth which awaits our acceptance.

2. Again, it may be objected that innumerable beliefs supported in the way here described have, confessedly, been mere errors ; and is not this sufficient to prove that, though the method of human belief may be correctly represented by our proposition, it is a method on which no reliance can be placed, and which it is the business of true culture to destroy ? This objection is provided for in the third member of our proposition. These so-called errors may be partial statements of a truth, imperfect attempts to embody thoughts of permanent value. We can seldom treat religious ideas as absolutely true or false ; and the sharp logical method of dealing with them shows more cleverness than wisdom. It may be doubted whether any widespread and lasting religious phenomenon can be found which is the result of unmixed error. The underlying idea, like a creative art, manifests itself at first in rude and barbarous forms ; but it strives continually to mould them into a finer beauty,



till it reaches at last its perfect spiritual expression. We may illustrate this proposition by an extreme instance. What, to our apprehension, can be more revoltingly superstitious than the practice of placing one's children on an altar, and cutting their throats in order to please God? Yet I am not sure that we have not here the germ of the highest Christian life. In the story of Abraham and Isaac we forget for a moment to call such a sacrifice superstition, simply because we are able to trace the mental process. There is not the blind dread of a guilty conscience, seeking to buy forgiveness, but the childlike faith of one who dearly loved his son, but loved his God better, and who believed that he could give no greater proof of his faith and love than by presenting to his Maker, through the mystery of sacrifice, a life dearer to him than his own. And this simplicity of faith and devotion leads, in the story, to a development in the idea of sacrifice. The higher voice spoke to Abraham, 'Lay not thy hand upon the lad.' For hundreds of years sacrifices of a more innocent character prevailed, which satisfied the desire to render some return to God for all his benefits, and to make some renunciation as an acknowledgment of sin. But to us these also would be superstitious, and it is difficult for us to associate any feelings of devotion with the blood-dripping altar. Another advance was yet to be made. Men began to feel after something deeper, and to perceive that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. These offerings were but the foreshadowings of the abiding substance of sacrifice, 'Lo! I come to do thy will, O God.' That these are really successive stages in the growth of the same fundamental idea is attested by the fact that the word sacrifice still lingers among us as the expression of the highest thought of the religious life. Thus, even in this extreme instance, while we may be humbled by the tardy growth of man's nobler thought, we can yet trace the path of Divine light shining amid the darkness.

3. It may be urged that we have just the same tendency



to believe a doctrine which satisfies a prejudice or an idiosyncrasy, and that a tendency which thus leads us to accept as realities the idle figments of our own brain can be no criterion of truth. This fact, no doubt, indicates uncertainty and liability to error. It shows that we must look for rules and appliances to correct our individual aberrations. But in this the religious faculty is only on a par with all others. We do not put out our eyes because they sometimes deceive us, nor do we decline to use our reason because we are sometimes inconsequent. So neither can we turn a deaf ear to the voice of religion within us because we sometimes interpret its oracles incorrectly.

This last objection leads us to observe, in relation to the whole subject, that our theory does not profess to be any broad and easy road to theological truth. It does not say that one man's judgment is as good as another's, or that every man may believe what he likes ; nor does it, in despair of objective truth, contend that what is true to one man may be false to another—a mode of speech which has been often used, but to which it is difficult to attach any definite meaning, unless it be that all religious truth is purely subjective. It distinctly asserts the reality of an inner witness of Divine truth ; but it does not say that the utterance of this witness is always clear and sharp, and that, when interrogated, it never gives an ambiguous reply ; nor does it affirm that there are no false prophets within, whose noisy declarations may be taken for the voice of truth. It admits the presence of grave difficulties, and of many sources of error ; and it thus explains the variety and uncertainty which mark the history of religion.

#### (d) *Nature of the Religious Element*

Having laid down a general theory, we must now view more in detail the nature of the religious element. In order to accomplish this task, as has already been briefly intimated, we must not begin by shutting up the essence of religion

in some neat little formula. The religious element is a given fact ; and the theologian, in surveying it, must be content to follow the slow and cautious procedure of the student of nature. Religion is larger and more complex than his definitions ; and he can no more formulate its essence than he can the essence of a flower or a bird. He must take his stand, not upon preconceptions, but upon facts carefully accumulated and examined ; and as the field which religion covers in history is so vast, and as the soul itself has depths of mystery and evanescent shades of feeling which it is difficult for the most reflective mind to fathom or to grasp, he must not expect to build up his temple of theology in a day, or be disheartened if he have often to re-examine his work. It may be true that men may easily know enough of religion for the practical guidance of life ; but I am speaking now of theology, which has to draw forth, for intellectual apprehension, the data of religion, and can be successfully cultivated only by those who are prepared to bestow upon it, with patient care, the best gifts that they possess. The objects lying nearest to us are by no means the most easily or the most universally known. Men breathed the air for thousands of years before they analysed it, and felt the beating heart of expectation and the glowing cheek of shame ages before they discovered the circulation of the blood. And so we may be guided by an unseen hand, or taught by an inner voice, long before we can interpret the guidance or refer the voice to its source. The religious movements of our nature will play their part though theologians bungle, as those who know nothing of the philosophy of æsthetics may have glorious visions of beauty, and gaze with awe and admiration upon the mountain, the ocean, or the midnight sky. The business of the theologian is not to anticipate by a circumscribing formula the verdict of nature, but to wait reverently upon the facts which flow from the depths of the human soul, and then in the maturity of knowledge and insight to give them a worthy interpretation. With



this caution, we may proceed to examine some of the larger features of our religious nature.

We may conveniently follow Schleiermacher in the division of our faculties into feeling, knowing, and doing,<sup>1</sup> though I am quite unable, with him, to limit religion to the first of these classes. That religion belongs in part to the domain of feeling is clear ; for a man who believed in God simply as a scientific fact, but had no feeling of any sort in relation to him, could not be called religious ; and Schleiermacher is correct in pointing out that a greater or less knowledge of dogmatics is no measure of a man's religion. Are we, however, to say that the knowledge which always exists in connexion with religion is no part of it, but is due merely to the fact that religious feeling exists in beings who are capable of thought, and therefore exercise that thought upon every subject which comes before them ? I think not. We have already seen that the religious sentiments imply the existence of an object ; and now we may go further, and say that the belief in the object is a necessary part of religion, and that the feeling and the belief are mutually dependent constituents of the same phenomenon. It cannot be maintained that the destruction of faith leaves the religious feeling wholly unimpaired, or, on the other hand, that the hardening of the religious sensibility is without effect upon our faith. The faith, it is true, may never have been formulated into distinct propositions, supported by their appropriate evidence ; but it involves a recognition, delusive or otherwise, of something beyond the self, and belief in its reality. There are, as we have already had occasion to observe, feelings, such as pleasure and pain, which are complete in themselves, and to which, therefore, this kind of argument will not apply. A man in pain will probably exercise his knowing faculty in relation to it, as he might in relation to a meteor or a balloon, but the knowledge and the pain are outside one another ;

<sup>1</sup> See his *Der Christliche Glaube*, I, pp. 6 sqq.

and accordingly we justly refer the pain solely to the department of feeling. This observation, however, will not hold good in regard to those feelings which are directed towards an object. As anger can have no existence apart from belief in an offending object, so religion cannot exist without belief in its object. Say that it is nothing but a sense of the mysterious, still the very words imply the conception of mystery, and a belief in something to which mystery attaches. Say that it is an absolute feeling of dependence, and even Schleiermacher, while denying all objective presentation, has to admit a dim and vague 'whence' as included in the feeling. I cannot understand this 'whence' except as a form of thought. Pain is complete without any 'whence'; but a feeling of dependence can exist only in relation to an apprehended something on which we depend. The two elements seem to be concurrent; and a man who was all susceptibility or all knowledge would be in either case incapable of religion.

Passing on to the field of volition, we must again distinguish between feelings which are simply a form of the sensibility, like pleasure and pain, warmth and cold, and those which, like covetousness and anger, tend to precipitate themselves into action. The latter are more than occasions, they are sources of activity, and are cramped and uneasy unless they find vent in doing. If religion includes feelings of the former class, it certainly comprises also some of the latter. Religious ceremonial does not result from the accidental exercise of our activity in relation to religious feeling, but flows out of the very nature of religion itself, which, without it, is defrauded of its legitimate growth. And again the connexion between morals and religion is more than accidental. The deepest religious natures apprehend this connexion the most clearly, and insist that he is not a truly religious man who wilfully neglects his duties. You rob religion, then, of one of its essential elements if you make it merely a form of susceptibility, which may indeed be taken into consideration



in our active life, but which would be equally complete in a being who was absolutely destitute of impulse and activity.

Perhaps the justice of the foregoing reasoning will be more apparent if we apply it to so high and pure a sentiment as compassion, which bears a closer analogy to religion than anger. Of compassion we obtain no finished picture till we include belief in a suffering object, and an impulse to administer relief. Here the belief and the feeling are mutually dependent. Without belief in the existence of suffering no compassion could exist ; and, on the other hand, if we had no feeling which stood in special relation to suffering, we could not know, in the deepest sense, the reality of that suffering. We might indeed be told of it, and believe that the account was correct ; but it would be a barren form of fact, the contents of which we did not really understand. And again, the compassion would be incomplete and sickly if it had no impulse towards the administration of relief. Thus knowing, feeling, and doing are united in one complex phenomenon.

We must, then, include in our picture of religion the three faculties of our nature, and we force ourselves into a one-sided attitude when we insist upon finding the whole of it in any one apart from the other two. If we would reach the catholicity of truth, we must accord to each its just rights, and endeavour to maintain them all within ourselves in due balance and proportion.

It may help us towards this catholicity if, without aiming at completeness, we attempt to classify the kinds of religion in accordance with the foregoing analysis. If religion, in its concrete life, involves, besides feeling, some sort of knowing or recognition of the Divine, and some sort of doing, there is room for great differences in the religious nature of different men, and the varying proportions in which the knowing, feeling, and willing elements may stand related to one another may form a basis for distinguishing religions according to their internal nature. In agreement with this



view religion falls into the three forms of dogmatic, emotional, and practical, according as one or another of the three elements predominates, the other two being always present, though in a less marked degree. The emotional, again, might be broken into groups according to the nature of the preponderant feeling and give rise, for instance, to some of the forms of pantheism and mysticism. The practical would readily assume the forms of moral and ceremonial. That some such differences exist in the manifestations of human religiousness there can be no doubt, and accordingly each of the three departments of our nature has been resorted to by distinguished thinkers in their attempt to define the essence of religion ; so that to this extent the result of our examination is confirmed by an observation of facts. It may be urged, however, that such variations do not arise from any difference in the religious nature of men, but from the different proportions in which the religious is combined with the other elements of our being. This view contains a certain amount of truth, and may indicate a source of variation in men's religious judgments which is not to be overlooked. But it is by no means adequate to explain all the facts which seem to indicate distinctions within the religious nature itself. Dogmatic religion, for instance, is by no means peculiar to men in whom the intellectual powers preponderate. There are men of great, and men of small intelligence both within and without religions that one would classify as dogmatic. We must therefore look for the source of the difference in the religious nature itself. The religion of some men seems able to thrive on a very vague and general apprehension of the Divine. Their needs are best satisfied by retaining a maximum of the subjective with a minimum of the objective element. They would keep all their feelings high and pure, but allow them to rest on a vast and undefined object, which to them becomes less real and satisfying through every attempt to make it clearer to the thought. The religion of others pines under such conditions. Their



great want is to find the object on which their nature may repose. Their feelings may take care of themselves, if only they can see God as he is. They do not need to be always cherishing their love to God; they cannot help loving him if they know him; and they cannot love him so long as he is a vague mysterious essence. To these men, accordingly, a clear theology is a religious rather than an intellectual necessity. A similar criticism may be applied to practical religion, which does not necessarily belong to men who are of a practical turn in the ordinary affairs of life, but is due to a predominant impulsiveness in the religious element, and assumes its double form according as the impulse to offer worship or the impulse to follow the highest goodness is the more marked.

(e) *Catholic Self-Knowledge*

In entering on the next stage of our inquiry we find among those who admit the general competence of the religious nature of man two different modes of regarding its function and capacity. It may be considered capable only of exercising a discriminating and selective power among doctrines presented to it from without, accepting those which appear to satisfy its necessities, rejecting those which conflict with its deepest sentiments, and treating as unimportant those which neither appeal to its wants nor shock its sensibilities. It may, on the other hand, be viewed as 'feeling after God, if haply it may find him,' and be deemed not wholly unequal to the discovery of religious truth, and the construction of that truth into a systematic theology.

The idea that the human mind possesses the 'consciousness of the veracity' of theological truths the moment they are presented—a claim which has sometimes been made by ardent advocates of intuition<sup>1</sup>—seems opposed to the most obvious facts. There is no system which commands the

<sup>1</sup> See for instance Miss Cobbe's Preface to Theodore Parker's works, p. xvi.

assent of more than a limited number of men. If we even strip off one belief after another, and go to mankind with a broad and simple theism, we do not meet with an immediate and universal assent. This, which seems to so many, rightly or wrongly, to present the most meagre conditions on which religion can subsist at all, is rejected by several others as a system which may possibly be true, but which we have no ground for believing; and, on the other hand, the majority of mankind 'possess the consciousness of the veracity' of a series of dogmas which the upholders of a simple theism are unable to accept. It is hardly philosophical to claim the authority of consciousness for just so much as we ourselves believe, and to treat all the belief of others, which lies beyond our own field, as resting on a totally different and less trustworthy basis. We must remember that they also claim as their authority for the doctrines which they hold the witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart; and this is their way of expressing 'the consciousness of their veracity.' It seems to me that just the same phenomenon, the same confident resting on an inward assurance, appears under every diversity of theological belief. It is true that this assurance may be differently regarded, appearing to some a permanent endowment of mankind, to others a special gift of grace to individuals. But this does not alter the intrinsic character of the phenomenon itself. Saul the Jew and Paul the Christian are equally certain that they are right. The Evangelical is as confident as the Unitarian, and the High Churchman as the Low; while the Mohammedan rejoices in the clearer light which heaven has vouchsafed to himself. The different modes, again, in which these various schools may have their theology presented to them, be it from Bible, or Church, or Koran, or eclectic philosophy, do not invalidate this view of the essential identity of the inward ground of belief. Nor is this view disposed of even by the various theories of the basis of belief; for behind almost all lies the assumption



of something beyond the mere logical evidence, constituting a spiritual force which supplements and confirms the intellectual process. This fact appears in the general disposition to treat infidelity as sin against an inner light, and not as a mere deficiency in the understanding ; and in the readiness of apologists to contend that the evidence which they present is amply sufficient for all who are not biased against religion, which is really a way of admitting that the evidence is not sufficient unless it be supported by an inward and spiritual authentication. If, then, we find a 'verifying faculty' appealed to, either expressly or by implication, in support of almost all forms of belief, must we not admit that it is very uncertain in its operations, and that in any single man, or even in large masses of men, it may be very imperfect and one-sided ? It is not sufficient, therefore, for the purposes of a scientific theology simply to say that we possess a consciousness of the veracity of theological truth ; but we must determine in what way the inner witness may be interrogated, what are the sources of error in such an examination, and what precautions must be adopted in order to elicit a true response.

If the religious nature is thus uncertain and vacillating in its recognition of spiritual truth, has it any power of discovery and construction ? An affirmative answer is guaranteed by historical evidence. The human mind has not waited passively for some one to come and tell it of Divine things ; but the dim, unformed sentiments have felt after their object, till sentiments have resulted in ideas, and ideas have been elaborated into systems of thought. Here, as in other departments of human life, it may be quite true that most men have little or no originating power, and must be content to accept what has been formulated by others ; but here too there have been creative minds who, from the deeper life within them, have struck out new lines of inquiry, and presented new theological doctrines to the faith and veneration of mankind. They, endowed with larger gifts, spiritual

and intellectual, than their fellows, have crystallized the unshaped sentiment of their age, and marked a step in the progress of our race. It is necessary, therefore, not only to examine the process of verification, and to obtain rules for a judicious criticism, but to consider also the means of discovery and the method of successful construction. These two directions of thought do not, however, impose on us the necessity of a separate treatment ; for the critical procedure is involved in the higher and more difficult pursuit of original investigation.

Turning, then, to our search for a true method in this department of theology, we find that our first requirement is a wide and exact knowledge of the nature and phenomena of the religious element. Without this knowledge it is clearly impossible for us to draw trustworthy conclusions from that nature and these phenomena. Accordingly it is our primary duty to determine how this knowledge may be obtained, and made available for service.

Our first step is to discover the source from which our knowledge must be drawn. The immediate source can be no other than ourselves. The phenomena of conscious life can be revealed only by consciousness. They are not open to the investigation of any sense, and must remain for ever hidden from him who has them not in himself. This might appear sufficiently obvious ; but as we are so much in the habit of looking at religion from the outside, and treating it as identical with the forms in which it is manifested, it may be well briefly to illustrate this point. ‘What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him ?’ Remove that spirit of man, and human nature becomes an unintelligible force. A dog could not through most exact and patient observation come to understand a human soul. To him our words and deeds must for ever remain an insoluble mystery ; for the thoughts and feelings from which they spring cannot be seen by the microscope, and do not betray their nature in revealing lines upon the spectrum. They



are true symbols only to him who has already found in himself the mental conditions which they express. They may indeed throw the thoughts into a fresh grouping, or shed a brilliant light on feelings which before were obscure. But their meaning for each person is inexorably confined within the limits of his internal experience. Had we no spirit of mirth within ourselves, no exhibitions of laughter would enable us to comprehend it, and it would be for us merely an outward effect due to an inscrutable cause. And if we had no devotion, the various phenomena to which that feeling has given rise in the outer world would have to be accepted by us as facts ; but the cause of these facts would be absolutely unknown, and any theory which we might form as to the devotional practices of mankind would in all probability be entirely incorrect, and simply prove our learned incompetence. It is, however, quite true that the inward experience of others may be of great value in developing and throwing unexpected lights upon our own ; and the importance of this truth must be considered in its proper place. At present we must simply note the fact that we can have no real knowledge of the religious nature of man till it presents itself in the form of self-knowledge.

This fundamental fact must already convince us that considerable difficulty attends the scientific use of the religious element either as a basis or as a criterion of theology. Although all men have a rude kind of self-knowledge, just as all have a rude knowledge of the world around them, yet accurate self-knowledge, held with full consciousness, is the property only of a few. The power of thorough and exact introspection is not a very common gift, and it is brought to its highest efficiency only by long-continued exercise. If it were only necessary to examine and register the outward phenomena presented by religion, our difficulties might be overcome by that patient and careful observation which lies within the reach of all who have the opportunity of study ; but the power of reading correctly that which is

within requires more than industry, and the difference in their ability to decipher that human nature which every man carries about with him, and which might seem to be the nearest and most certain object of knowledge, has given rise to the various systems which have been advocated by rival philosophers. Here we are peculiarly liable to be misled by our inclinations, to seize on the more prominent mental characteristics, to the disparagement of those which are more subtle but no less important, and thus to base our theories on a partial examination of the facts. If this remark be true of mental philosophy in general, it is much more true of that branch of it which deals with religion. Here the bias of education acts with peculiar force, and men feel a kind of sacred obligation to defend that side of the religious element which is most marked within themselves, and to which they have devoted the largest share of their attention. Hence it is that the majority of mankind have shut themselves up in sectarian conclusions, and come to mistake their own little plot for the universe of truth.

These remarks lead us to notice a qualification without which self-knowledge does not adequately express the first requirement of a sound method. This self-knowledge must be exhaustive or catholic. We must not be content to take the first strong impulses of piety, or of faith, or of charity, and dress these up as representing the religion of mankind. We must endeavour to get behind these, and seek the unexplored depth, where we may find the germs of nobler things, which await the developing power of a richer and warmer experience. How often have men discovered that to be within them which they had never suspected to be there, and found that to be a force mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, which once they had derided as the feeble offspring of superstition. And how often do men express themselves in a way suited indeed to the narrow horizon of their inward view, but which one cannot but feel that a single touch of holier experience would completely alter. It is



needful, therefore, to search out the delicate traces of our more hidden feeling and even of our higher possibilities ; and then to be humble, remembering the dim and shadowy region that we have not yet traversed, and knowing that so long as we fall short of the fulness of the perfect man we are not furnished with all the data that are requisite for a catholic theology.

It is impossible for us to attempt a complete analysis and classification of the phenomena exhibited by the religious element, so subtle, so variously combined, and so difficult satisfactorily to name, are many of these phenomena ; but it may be useful if we mark out certain great lines of tendency, those especially which are apt to exist apart or in antagonism. For such a ground-plan may act as a check on our natural bias, and force upon our attention considerations which otherwise we might be inclined to overlook.

Accepting the existence of four principal tendencies, towards doctrinal, emotional, moral, and ceremonial religion, we may observe, in each of these, two opposing and mutually limiting movements. The doctrinal phase of religion, the disposition to dwell upon the Object of religion as that without which religion could not exist at all, inevitably results in theology, the scientific statement of a religious knowledge that may be held unscientifically. Differences, therefore, in the mode in which we dwell upon the Object of religion may be expected to display themselves in the theological world ; and consequently the differences which are observed in the latter may point to fundamental religious differences, and assist us in the analysis of our own nature. Now in the schools of theology we notice a constant warfare between the conservative and progressive. The former regard the latter as irreverent innovators ; and the reformers charge their immovable opponents with blindness, credulity, and bigotry. These epithets may describe fairly enough the extreme representatives of the conflicting tendencies. But if we study the highest minds in each school, there seems

to be something deep and worthy in their fundamental postulates, and we are driven to ask whether both may not have a religious root. In the contemplation of the infinite Object of religion we may be filled with wonder and thankfulness at all that we know, all that we have experienced. That we should know so much seems enough, and more than enough. Any disturbance of what we feel, by criticizing the imperfect forms of thought, or by pressing on to new acquisitions, seems like a noisy and profane intrusion upon the solemn hush of a sanctuary of prayer. It is not that we are wholly unconscious of dark spots upon our field of Divine knowledge ; but they are spots upon a sun whose glory prevents them from being seen except through some obscuring medium of human indifference or passion. Nor is it that we deliberately think that we have exhausted the Divine nature ; but what we have already gained appears so full and satisfying that we need no more, and we secretly think that all new attainments must be as nothing in comparison with the old. We only wish to be left alone, that we may wrap our mantles about our faces, and, undisturbed by the world's changing scenes, worship him who fills our hearts, and whose voice has spoken to faithful souls from the beginning. Thus we become conservatives in theology, and view with discomfort and regret the shifting tides of thought, unable to see that they too are moving in obedience to a Divine attraction. On the other hand, the feeling may haunt us that, after all, what we know of God is but a drop in an infinite ocean, and that our highest conceptions must be utterly unworthy of him whom none can find out unto perfection. We would not stand still, but press on to a nearer, and ever a nearer communion. What grander task than to clear away the errors that darken the human heart, and bring to men a nobler thought of God ? To exalt as adequate and final expressions of eternal truth any one of our 'little systems' seems to border closely on impiety. We would not forget the dimness of our present vision, but, placing our trust



in the leading hand of God, continually cry, Oh ! that we now might find him, and see the King in his beauty, with no veil of error interposed ; now we know in part ; oh ! that we might know him even as we are known. Thus we become theologically progressive, pledged to the eternal pursuit of a goal infinitely distant. These two tendencies, then, which might be regarded as mutually destructive, both spring from a genuine religious source ; and he who would not shut himself up in a single school must endeavour to understand both, and to blend them in the fulness of a catholic and harmonious nature.

Passing on to the emotional phase of religion, we may notice two tendencies which we may call the social and the solitary. There is the disposition to share our religious feelings, and mingle them, as it were, into one common store, from which each may draw a richer life than he could find in himself alone. From this disposition springs the Church, regarded as a communion of saints, comprising under it assemblies for public worship, and meetings of every kind for mutually strengthening the religious life. This tendency, when unchecked, begets what may appear an undue ease and familiarity in the interchange of the deeper sentiments, and a form of life which is wanting in the finer elements of reverence and dependence on God. On the other hand is the disposition to keep all these things, and ponder them in our hearts, as too sacred and private to be talked about. There are passages of communion between the soul and God which are betrayed and vulgarized by being told to mortal ears. Our religion is between us and him, and man may not interfere. We would speak with him ' *solus cum solo* ' ; and none may know what passes then. We want not Church, priest, confession, or sacrament ; they only break rudely in on a joy which they cannot know and cannot help. Let them leave the soul in its solitude, away from the dull beat of human modes and symbols, that it may rest itself in the silent presence. This tendency, when unchecked by the

other, produces a sensitiveness which is hardly consistent with simplicity, and a reticence which may prevent the needed word from being spoken, and, while it is consistent with depth, interferes with breadth of sympathy and experience. These two phases of the religious life conduct us to what may be termed dependent and immediate religion, which again develop themselves into the stronger contrast of authoritative and liberal. In the latter form they manifest themselves in sharply opposed schools, which regard one another with mutual aversion. A system which is really based on human nature, and not on its partial developments, must find room for both, and leave us our love for prophets and saints, and our reverence for the Church as the venerable treasure-house of the world's spiritual wisdom, and at the same time not tarnish, but glorify the soul's inner life of dependence on God, and devotion to him as higher, closer, dearer than all others.

Coming now to the moral side of religion, which is due to our thirst for an ideal or Divine righteousness, we observe here also two conflicting tendencies. On the one hand, we may be impressed by the magnificence of the end which we seek to attain, and by the intrinsic grandeur of a nature to which such an end can be proposed. The pursuit of this end may be a source of constant exhilaration, and instead of being depressed and grieved at our many failures we may glory in our frequent triumphs. Hence we shall dwell upon the greatness and strength of human nature, and have no sympathy with those who speak of its inner weakness and corruption. On the other hand, the very greatness of the end may force upon our attention the contrast of our poor attainments. Hence the sense of sin, and the sad feeling that the ideal end is out of all proportion to our present strength. These two tendencies, like those previously mentioned, have met upon the field of controversy, and the exuberant freshness of a conquering manhood been opposed by the cry of conscious weakness for redemption and reconciliation.



We must take both into account in the construction of our theology, and seek to unite in ourselves the energy of triumphant hope with the softness of unfeigned humility.

Lastly, in the ceremonial tendency in religion we notice two distinct phases. There is the disposition to approach God in worship with the most beautiful things that we possess, and to make the highest forms of art expressive of the varied sentiments of devotion. We would not offer to God what is mean and ugly, but endeavour to make our service in some measure worthy of the greatness of him to whom it is presented. If this disposition be unbalanced, it will lead us to mistake the form for the reality, and to neglect the inward in our attention to the outward. On the other hand is the feeling that God is so near the soul that nothing need come between; that golden temple and ruined hovel are alike to him whose sanctuary is the purified heart; and that all we want for our worship is a quiet place where we may forget the world and its vain splendours, and open our minds to receive the light of heaven. Unchecked, this feeling ends in puritanic simplicity, and builds those barn-like meeting-houses, whose very absence of artistic expression tells us of men whose faith had overcome the world. We must recognize both these tendencies, and so learn to combine beauty with spirituality of worship, and offer to the public service of God our choicest gifts, not as though he needed anything, but as expressive of our deepest and holiest affections.

#### (f) *Sources of Error*

The preceding survey may enable us to recognize certain sources of error, which affect every attempt to construct a doctrinal system.

1. A doctrine which stands in immediate relation to our spiritual sensibility presupposes two distinct processes, spiritual discernment and intellectual formulation. It is possible that one of these might possess the highest efficiency, while the other was very defective. One might have a vivid



spiritual perception of the deep things of God, and surrender his life to the beauty of his vision, and yet be quite unable to present their implicit truths in a form which would satisfy all the requirements of advancing thought. The moment we pass from the immediate experience, and begin to express its contents in doctrinal form, we necessarily encounter all the uncertainties that attend our intellectual movements. The shape of our doctrine is inevitably moulded by the conditions of thought and knowledge belonging to our age and country ; and therefore, while it enshrines some permanent truth, it may itself be transient. It follows that every doctrine is justly subject to criticism and revision, as the boundaries of knowledge are widened and thought becomes more exact. But a criticism which is merely negative will do little good. In criticizing ancient dogma we must not only understand the philosophy and language and mingled mass of traditional ideas which characterized the time when it arose, but we must trace it to its permanent spiritual roots, and consider how far it gave expression to a genuine religious experience. To sum up, we must distinguish between the dogma and the religious consciousness which it sought to interpret ; and if we find ourselves compelled to reject the one, we may nevertheless endeavour to preserve the other. This principle will be amply illustrated in the course of our investigation.

2. Setting aside the intellectual element, and reverting to the simple religious consciousness, we find there also tendencies to error from which few inquirers can claim to be exempt.

(a) Let us suppose that the inquirer possesses at least in germ every primitive feeling, want, tendency, or belief involved in the religious element, so that by a thorough knowledge of himself he would be acquainted with the whole range of the religious consciousness. Then, I think, this difficulty arises. The contents of the religious consciousness are seldom, if ever, found properly balanced in any individual. Experience does not justify us in believing that in ourselves,



for instance, each has its full weight, and no more than its full weight. Usually some tendency is predominant, and others feeble. When we look into ourselves, those that are predominant strike the attention first, while those that are feeble may escape observation. Or if a very acute observation detects the more evanescent phenomena, yet the inquirer will deem them of minor importance, and will assign them a much lower rank in his system than that which they will obtain from another in whom they are paramount, while those which preponderate in the former are feeble and obscure in the latter. Hence arise divergent and antagonistic systems, and contradictory definitions, when definitions are attempted, each inquirer judging of the whole of religion by that tendency which is most marked in himself.

What is the remedy? It is to confine our attention no longer to our own individual nature, but to seek as wide an acquaintance as we can with the nature of others. This may be done either directly or through the medium of books. A friend may call our attention to some fact in ourselves which had escaped our observation; the meditations of a writer may bring to light depths in the soul which we had not previously known. But the discipline which we most need is intercourse and an earnest endeavour to sympathize with those whose predominant tendencies are most strongly opposed to our own. The bias of our mind in mature life is largely the result of education, and may be to a considerable extent counteracted by a self-imposed education. Unfortunately the religious jealousies of mankind prevent that direct intercourse which would be most beneficial, if engaged in with mutual courtesy and respect. But we are not shut out from books; and we may constrain ourselves to read those which appeal to a wholly different class of wants from those of which we are most conscious. We should read such books, not with a desire to find their weak points, but to find their strong points, to gain the point of view of the writer and understand through the power of sympathy



the state of mind from which the book emanated. We may thus strengthen those elements in us which are weak, and train ourselves into a condition of mind in which we shall discover truer data for our theology than we could do if we confined our examination to our own individual nature, and made no study of the minds of others. We do not in this process blindly submit to the authority of others, or even accept anything on carefully sifted evidence, but simply allow other minds of the most diverse characters to exert their proper influence upon the growth of our nature, and thus educate our minds into a wider catholicity. Our data are still drawn wholly from within, but from a more balanced and better furnished soul than before.

(*b*) The second source of error under this head is similar. In the last case we supposed that the inquirer possessed all the contents of the religious element, only not in proportion, some being excessive, others defective. But is this invariably the case? Is not the individual nature occasionally without some constituent of the religious consciousness? Or, if that constituent is latently there, is it not often so dormant as never to have revealed itself, so that no amount of introspection would give the inquirer any, even the least, knowledge of it? It is easy to see that all the evils which we found in the last instance would be aggravated in this, and that the correcting discipline would be proportionately more severe; and it is not necessary to traverse again the same ground. But if no amount of training will bring such dormant constituents to light, what then is the position which the inquirer ought to assume? Ought he to dismiss them as the fantastic offspring of a diseased imagination simply because they are not in himself? That would be about as reasonable as for a blind man to scoff at the possibility of vision. Yet he must not lightly assume that they are fundamental in human nature. He must consider whether they are not explicable as a diseased or immature form of something in himself. If on careful consideration they are



simply incomprehensible to him, then he must ascertain whether they appear very widely in human nature, and in men educated under diverse circumstances, or whether they arise only at a certain stage of spiritual culture. If he see reason to believe that they are all but universally characteristic of the religious nature of man, his only legitimate course will be to admit that there is an incompetence in himself. This result may hold good even should it be the case that the phenomena in question appear only at a certain stage of spiritual culture. The inquirer will in that case have to consider whether the phenomena are in all instances essentially of the same character ; whether they appear only in flighty and peculiar persons, or also in men of sound and sober judgment ; and whether they augment the power and greatness of those in whom they manifest themselves, or make them weak and puerile. He will seek also the testimony of those who ought to be most competent to judge in such a case, and consider whether their respective testimonies agree so far as they go, or are mutually contradictory. And if all the evidence, or vastly the greater portion of it, tend to show that the phenomena in question are fundamental in human nature, while he has little or nothing to oppose to this evidence but a negation in himself, and perhaps many others, he will be bound to admit that there is some incompetence in himself, or at all events to suspend his judgment. Thus in constructing his system he will not forget or deny the existence of these facts, he will not admit anything contradictory to them, and in regard to that special department of theology which relates to them he will wait patiently for the dawning of a new light upon his soul. Like the blind man he will believe that others see while he is dark, and will reverently hope for the time when he will have the prophet's vision. These suggestions may guard us against the error of giving shallow and paltry interpretations to the utterances of great prophetic souls.

(c) A third source of error is our liability to mistake a



prejudice or idiosyncrasy in ourselves for something fundamental in human nature. Many perhaps regard the doctrine of the infallibility of the Bible as a primary truth ; for it has been so instilled into them from childhood that it seems as if their nature could not be the same dissociated from that doctrine. Of course no man accustomed to exact thought could, even if he held that doctrine, fall into such an error, but would see clearly that it was a doctrine dependent on external evidence. Still we are all subject to idiosyncrasies, and it is desirable that we should be able to distinguish these by some ready test from the permanent data of human nature. We ought, I think, to suspect ourselves of having an idiosyncrasy if we are solitary or nearly solitary in our impression, and especially if that impression be opposed to the general sense of mankind. We ought similarly to suspect ourselves of having a prejudice if our impression is peculiar to our party, if it does not make any way with cautious inquirers outside our party, but is almost invariably the sign of a certain kind of education. Now, although we may be convinced that we are under the influence of a prejudice, and therefore may guard ourselves against being biased by it, yet so long as it remains it is inevitable that our judgment should be more or less warped ; and therefore it is desirable to eradicate the prejudice. The process is somewhat similar to that employed in the preceding cases. It is intercourse with others of every shade of opinion that gradually effaces prejudice from the mind. That there is danger in this process must be admitted ; for more than prejudice may be taken from those who are not strong enough to bear such a discipline. It seems clear that for the theologian the discipline is necessary ; for to shut oneself up in one's own clique perpetuates prejudice as much as it obstructs progress.

It will be observed that the tests which I have mentioned for prejudice or idiosyncrasy furnish a general, not a universal rule ; a rule applicable to the great mass of mankind, but



not to all. Instances are conceivable, and have no doubt existed, in which the peculiarity of an individual was not a prejudice or what is ordinarily called an idiosyncrasy, but an anticipation of the future inheritance of the race. When Abraham, according to the story, felt that nothing short of an absolute monotheism could satisfy the religious nature of man, he must have stood almost alone. Others may have seen in his assertion of that great truth nothing but a negation, a denial of the existence of the gods ; and devout idolaters must have thought him under a strange hallucination. Or to take a higher and more historical example, Christ must have felt himself alone in the possession of some of his most important doctrines. Others thought he was mad ; but he calmly assumed that human nature in its divinest form had not been fathomed by any of his contemporaries ; and though no man knew the Son, he could not admit the thought that he might after all be the victim of infatuation. There are, then, cases where the tests that I have given are not applicable ; but every one should hesitate long, and use severe self-scrutiny, before regarding himself as an exception to the general laws of his race. The probability against his being such an exception is millions to one. Still he may be such. And if the apparent truth that presses on his soul stand the test of years, if it become fuller and deeper as he grows older, if his desire to advocate it have no taint of self-assertion, if it seem to him a truth greater than himself, a truth of which he is not worthy, if he find his nature becoming larger, calmer, sweeter under its power, if it enable him to interpret with more penetrating skill the other portions of human nature, so that he knows ‘ what is in man,’ then he ought not to keep silence, lest haply he be found even fighting against God. And when an oppressed soul thus unburdens itself, trusting that humanity in the future will rise to the same stature with itself, and take up the same burden that it has borne, however exalted may be its language or its claims, it is not justly chargeable with

presumption. The only test has been applied which the case admits of, surrender to the Divine will till the self-will is gone, and the truth of God burns with an unbearable brightness. Let men be honest with themselves ; and when with heart-felt sincerity they can say, ' I seek not my own will, but the will of him that sent me,' then they may tread paths where none are prepared to follow, and speak with authority though none receive their witness.

Our survey of the sources of error suggests some further remarks, which may serve to induce caution and humility in our judgment of religious questions. If our view has been correct, it follows that the faculty of spiritual discernment exists in various degrees of strength and fulness in different persons, and is susceptible of cultivation and growth. It may be useful to illustrate this position by a few examples. The fundamental belief of the theologian, that God exists, is neither accepted universally nor held by the theist himself with uniform certainty. If we may speak with any confidence of what passes in the mind of another, there have been men who have not only denied, in obedience to their philosophical system, the validity of belief in God's existence, but have themselves been entirely without that belief, and had no sense of unsatisfied want in their atheism. It follows either that the arguments for the existence of God are inconclusive, or that they carry conviction only when the vision of reason is assisted by religious apprehension. Again, among those who do believe in God's existence we observe great variation in the degree of their belief. It does not in every instance amount to that unquestioning confidence which we feel in the reality of the outward world or of the mind of our friend ; but in some it is full and strong, in others it is faint and uncertain. A similar variation is found to exist in the individual believer by comparing one time with another. Now we believe with such intensity that it appears as though no heaven could make God more manifestly near than he is here upon earth ; and again our minds feel dim and confused,



and we cry, 'Why art thou so far from me? Return; O Lord, how long?' We observe here a characteristic which is absent from beliefs that rest upon a purely intellectual basis. These do not change in certitude according to our differing moods; but the belief in God depends in part on finer sensibilities, which are not always equally active. The religious element, then, varies in different people, and is susceptible of frequent change even in the same person. In many it seems so dwarfed and feeble as to be almost non-existent; in others it has a saintly richness, fulness, and strength. And in the same person it is sometimes so energetic as to become lord of the whole man, putting sin and sorrow under its feet; and again, as though wearied, it relaxes its hold, and the lower nature for a time exercises a rebellious rule. It is not my purpose to inquire now into the cause of this diversity; how far it is dependent on the will, how far on differences of original constitution; how far it is a necessary concomitant of our frailty, how far designed as an important portion of our moral probation. At present I would merely note it as a fact in human nature, and point out its connexion with the variation in men's belief in the existence of God. It accounts for that variation, whether we regard the belief as primitive in the religious element, or think only that strength in the religious nature predisposes us to attach due weight to the arguments of the theologian, while religious incapacity tempts us to be sceptical and slow of heart to believe.

May we venture to pass on to the attributes of God? The great metaphysical attributes, self-existence, infinity, eternity are apprehended by the reason. For the recognition of these no special spiritual qualifications appear to be requisite. Our acceptance of them is forced upon us by the fundamental and universal laws of thought; so that even the professed atheist can hardly escape the admission that there must be an absolute and eternal something. But there is another class of attributes which we may call the spiritual. How

shall we know his love, his holiness, his justice, his compassion? As none knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him, even so the things of God knoweth none but the Spirit of God. If these things be not at all in *us* we cannot know them in *him*. Unless his Spirit passes, as it were, across the field of our consciousness, we cannot recognize his attributes. 'He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.' As face answers to face in a mirror, so attribute must answer to attribute when the soul turns to its Creator, or nothing but blank mystery will be before it. A communion of spirit is the indispensable condition of our knowledge of him. If the presence of that spirit in us be feeble and inconstant, our understanding of the Divine attributes will be dim and untrustworthy. In proportion as it becomes paramount, so as not merely to flit like a ghost over our own lower life, but to raise up our spirit into coincidence with itself, will our knowledge of God's spiritual attributes be full and accurate. And he only who has that Spirit without measure can know as he is known.

Is it asked by what marks we can recognize in us the presence of the Divine Spirit? I reply that the highest spirit in us is invariably accompanied by the knowledge that it *is* the highest; and if the Spirit which is of God and the spirit which is of the world meet together in us, we cannot hesitate in deciding which is the more divine.

If we descend to the lower knowledge of the human soul, we may observe a similar variation. We have seen that self-knowledge is the key to our knowledge of others; and therefore, if others have attributes higher and nobler than any we can be even momentarily conscious of, we cannot apprehend these attributes. The man who is all selfishness does not believe in generosity or disinterestedness. The revengeful mock at the forgiving temper. The coward is perplexed by the manifestation of courage. And to him who has never loved or suffered the cross is an insoluble mystery.



I do not mean that we cannot apprehend attributes greater in degree than our own, but limit the remark to those which we do not in any degree possess. If, however, the disparity be very great, there will be a proportionate difficulty in understanding the attributes of another ; and the more nearly we stand on the same level, the more complete will be our mutual recognition. The things of a man knoweth none but the spirit of man which is in him. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and only the spiritual nature in us can detect the attributes of the human soul. If that nature be dull, cramped, feeble, buried, as it often is, in the things of the world and the flesh, it is impossible that it can interpret the lofty endowments of saints and prophets. But the converse is not true. The higher nature can understand the lower, often better than it understands itself. He in whom all passion seems subdued, nevertheless comprehends the power of those passions which he keeps in subjection. Christ, in whose history we find no record of penitence, knew the horror of that sin which he spurned, and saw perhaps as none other saw how it spreads a cloud between man and God. A full humanity, even without any aberrations of the will, can know what is in sinful man, and interpret diseases of the spirit better than the sufferer himself. He that is spiritual judges of all things, but is himself judged of by none who is less spiritual. In order to read, then, with a delicate accuracy the attributes merely of the human soul the religious nature ought to be deep, full, and harmonious ; and this is not always the case even with the most serious theologian.

A few words must still be said about questions of relation. Our perception of the relations between objects depends largely on the clearness of our knowledge of their attributes ; and our perception of spiritual relations is no exception to this general rule. A penetrating knowledge of the Divine Spirit on the one side, and of the human soul in its various phases on the other, is the indispensable condition of a



delicate discernment of the relations of the soul to God, or of the souls of men to one another. But this is not all. If indeed our knowledge of Divine and human attributes were perfect, we might have a complete perception of religious relations. But as this is not the case, we are bound to apply any test which may help us to verify our conclusions. Such a test is to be found in spiritual experience; and indeed I believe that without such experience our conviction of some of the most important relations would be little better than a distant echo of what more saintly souls have felt and known. Perhaps this statement will be best unfolded by taking a few examples. In Psalm xxxii. 3-5 we have these words: 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture was changed as with the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' Here is implied the doctrine that impenitence causes disquietude of heart, and brings upon us the heavy hand of the Divine displeasure, and that humble confession induces the peace of forgiveness. Was this only the feeling of the Psalmist, or is it a universal truth? Experience must decide, and only in our own consciousness can we find an indubitable answer for ourselves. Somewhat similar are the words, 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.'<sup>1</sup> Is the contrite man free from that contempt of the higher Spirit which we often speak of as self-contempt, and is that awarded only to the mortification of a still unsubdued pride? And does sorrow of heart bestow a deeper peace than any rite formally offered as a propitiation? Here those are the truest judges who have mourned in unselfish sorrow for their sin. Again, take the words, 'My heart trusted in him, and I am helped';<sup>2</sup> 'O

<sup>1</sup> Ps. li. 17.<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxviii. 7.



Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.’<sup>1</sup> Does trust in God bring with it help and blessedness, and may we lay that down as a universal doctrine? Clearly those who have never trusted cannot tell. Those only who have tasted the fruits of patient waiting upon God know with certainty whether their salvation is from him.<sup>2</sup> And once more, when Christ speaks of the things hidden from the wise and prudent as being revealed to babes, does he not utter a deep experience of his own? Does he not in effect tell us that seeking for Divine knowledge rather in a childlike intercourse with God than in the learning of the schools, he had seen gleams of light which philosophers had desired in vain? Paul expresses the same experience when he says, ‘That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.’ Is this a true doctrine? Is the devout, lowly, simple heart fuller of Divine light than the richly stored and subtle intellect? Let those who have both large intellects and lowly hearts answer the question.

We have now seen that the religious element is variable in human nature, existing in different degrees of intensity and fulness in different persons, not constant in the same person, and requiring to be enriched by the lessons of experience; and that the perfect theologian ought to possess this element in all its power and completeness, and stored with the most precious fruits of long communion both with God and man. This result may convince us of two important facts. First, religious truths are not latent in every man, requiring only a formal statement to bring them into the clear light of consciousness; but the element to which they appeal, and which furnishes a criterion of their truth, being susceptible of cultivation and growth, may apprehend these truths with every variety of distinctness, and only the rarely gifted few, if even a few, can see them in all their beauty, built up into a perfect and eternal temple. Secondly,

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxiv. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxii. 1.



we need not exact the test of universality before we accept the evidence of the religious element. Our examination has shown that many of its phenomena may be more or less restricted, and that probably its highest manifestations will appear only here and there. It is as though the eye were susceptible of a constantly increasing power, and brought back to a few observers reports of other worlds, and visions of glory which were hidden from the less advanced. Then we should not deny the testimony of those whose sight, strengthened by long gazing at the Divine, penetrated into holier depths than our own ; but we should cry in humility and hope, Lord, give sight to us also, that we may see thee and adore.

(g) *Confirmatory Facts*

It may throw further light upon our survey of the religious element, and at the same time confirm our general position, if we notice a few prominent facts in religious history which are such as our previous examination might lead us to anticipate.

1. The first broad fact that arrests our attention is the great diversity of theological belief. This may be observed, not only in different countries and periods, but in the same place and at the same time, when precisely the same external evidence is before every inquirer. On looking closer, we may perceive that the various religious systems bear a certain relation to national or individual character. Jewish theology is not the same as Grecian, nor Phrygian as Roman, nor Irish as English ; and if you imagine any of these transposed, you will at once recognize an inconsistency between the national character and the religious faith and practice superinduced upon it. And so with individuals, their views are not entirely the result of investigation, apart from all personal bias, but are in harmony with the mental characteristics of their authors, so that the transference of their views from one to another would at once excite a sense of



incongruity.<sup>1</sup> These phenomena are readily explained by our theory. We have seen that the religious element is not invariable, but exists in different persons in different proportions, and in developments more or less one-sided. And in this element the beliefs implicitly contained in it are not given ready formed, but are sought after by wants and tendencies which these beliefs are adapted to satisfy. Those whose religious nature is less matured will rest in different conclusions from those who have the Spirit in larger measure, and those whose bias is in opposite directions will adopt conflicting systems of theology. And lastly, a rich spiritual experience, which admits an infinite variety of degrees, is indispensable to the solution of many important questions. Here, then, we have elements of uncertainty whose combined action is amply sufficient to account for the otherwise amazing diversity of theological belief.

2. Most men have a power of acknowledging and believing a doctrine which they could not unaided have discovered. The heart responds to the appeal of a powerful religious teacher, and we joyfully accept new truth, or feel a fresh confidence in the old, though we care not to assign a distinct reason for our belief, and our own more languid natures, away from such an influence, could not have generated it. Accordingly multitudes have some strong religious faith, and spend simple and godly lives, who have never reasoned upon their faith, and whose belief, while deriving its form from the Church to which they belong, is evidently a thing of the heart, and is not held merely in deference to superior

<sup>1</sup> Compare Professor James's remark in his Gifford Lectures on *Varieties of Religious Belief* (p. 487) : ' If an Emerson were forced to be a Wesley, or a Moody forced to be a Whitman, the total human consciousness of the divine would suffer. The divine can mean no single quality, it must mean a group of qualities, by being champions of which in alternation, different men may all find worthy missions. Each attitude being a syllable in human nature's total message, it takes the whole of us to spell the meaning out completely.'



authority. They have within them a yearning which finds its rest in the doctrines presented to them.

3. Connected with the preceding is the fact that in their theology men generally feel a certain dependence on authority. In our theory there is abundant room for this dependence. Theology must be slowly elaborated from the resources of human nature ; and while men have a rich, but varying capacity for recognizing the truths which their nature demands, they are impelled to look for some authority to interpret their inarticulate wants, and present in an established form the beliefs which their condition at the time being requires. If there were no such authority, multitudes would be left without any satisfying form of belief ; and while they were conscious of vague spiritual wants, they would endeavour to appease these by conceptions and practices lower than they were capable of appreciating, instead of being ennobled and elevated by having the highest form of doctrine which the advancement of the age would permit it to receive pressed upon their attention. Accordingly, while having the sources of belief within themselves, they nevertheless gladly range themselves under some generally accepted and enduring authority.

4. This leads us to another fact connected with the revolts which from time to time occur against established authority. Men outgrow theologies. The formulæ which can enlist all the sympathy and zeal of one generation seem foreign to the religious wants of another. Great revolutions in theology do not commonly arise from the calm investigations of the reason, but from a feeling that the old forms are beneath, and therefore unsuited to, the altered condition of the soul. We do not reason about dead forms of belief ; for they no longer appeal to our higher instincts. The child, when he becomes a man, puts away childish things ; and the human race, long trained by the Divine Spirit, is content that its old knowledge and prophesyings should pass away, and, as it draws nearer to the time when it shall know as it is known,



demands in successive periods higher forms of belief, forms which still are only temporary symbols, and yet more divine than those which they supersede.

5. But, lastly, we observe that, while men outgrow theologies, they nevertheless cling to the form of a creed long after they have ceased to believe in it literally ; and it is only when the creed has become intolerable that it is finally discarded. I think this is more than a conservative attachment to what is venerable ; and it is a result which we should anticipate from our theory. It is often asked, if you take away such and such a doctrine, what will be left ? The existing doctrine, however imperfect, symbolizes a truth, and is therefore preferable to having no doctrine at all. Those who advocate the old doctrine contrast it, not with a more correct statement of the same truth, but with an absolute denial ; and they rightly feel that, if that is the alternative, they had better retain what they have got. Growth modifies, but does not annihilate, human wants ; and so long as these wants demand their corresponding truths, men will adhere to any doctrine, however irrational, which admits the divine rights of these wants, in preference to a doctrine which denies their reality or ridicules their claims. Now, a new and truer doctrine cannot be discovered the moment dissatisfaction is felt with the old ; and as the sound of reform is apt to be first raised by men who feel only the dissatisfaction, and care nothing for the implicit truth, and who therefore meet the old creed with simple contradiction, men's zeal is aroused, and they warmly defend against merely negative assaults the doctrine which they know answers to something in their hearts. And thus authority maintains its ancient forms long after the spirit has ceased to find in them its real home, and falls at last, not before the small attacks of a carping logic, but only before the irresistible onslaught of a new and higher faith.

This brief survey may be sufficient to convince us that some of the broad facts in religious history are in complete harmony

with our theory, and so furnish an additional confirmation of its truth.

(h) *Revelation*

Before we bring this division of our subject to a close we must advert to the question whether there is any room for a revelation. Revelation might conceivably assume different forms.

1. A revelation might be given of truths which the human mind in its normal action could not possibly discover. This is the position which has been generally defended by Christian theologians ; and there is nothing in our view of the religious element to negative such a position. It has been maintained that the fully developed soul may be the source of a very noble theology. But to assert that we have powers capable of covering the whole possible field of Divine truth would be mere assumption ; and if we ever see reason to believe that a revelation has been given of truths which lie wholly beyond the range of the human faculties, we shall be bound to accept it, in spite of the plea, which the best theologians would readily admit, that we know a great deal without it. This is simply a question of fact, which must be decided by an impartial examination of the evidence.

We may perhaps observe that this sort of miraculous announcement of doctrines would be more properly called 'communication' than 'revelation' ; for it does not imply any removal of a veil from our spiritual understanding, and is just as accessible to the scoundrel as to the saint. It constitutes, however, what has usually been called 'revealed,' as distinct from 'natural' religion. Being itself miraculous in its invisible origin, it requires the evidence of visible miracles, which are open to ordinary historical tests. This evidence appears more and more precarious under all the conditions of modern knowledge ; and accordingly this view of revelation is fast vanishing, or has already vanished, from the minds of large numbers of modern theologians.



It is, however, maintained, in express opposition to recent tendencies, by the Catholic Church; and an anathema was pronounced by the last Vatican Council, 1870, against those who denied the reality and evidential value of miracles.<sup>1</sup> Among Protestants this position has a classical defence in Paley's *Evidences of Christianity*, and it is, I suppose, still maintained by the majority, though large numbers are doubtful and bewildered.

2. There might be a revelation or authoritative sanction, of truths which are implicitly contained in the soul, but at the knowledge of which the mind, in the normal exercise of its powers, only arrives by a tedious process. Such a revelation would not be superfluous; for it would put multitudes in possession of satisfying truths which they were capable of receiving with gladness and faith, but would themselves have been unable to elaborate. The world is full of such revelations, of more or less limited scope. Every soul that delivers its message in the language of deep conviction thus reveals some truth, and gives sight to some blinder soul than itself. Whether any revelation of this kind has such a world-wide significance, and bears such peculiar marks, as to deserve pre-eminently and in a special sense the name of revelation is a question which evidence alone can determine.

3. A revelation might be given, not immediately of doctrinal truth, but of the spirit which is the ground of doctrinal truth. If in any son of man the presence of the Divine Spirit were so full, and the submission of the human will so devout, that in him were combined the most transcendent loftiness of soul and the most lowly simplicity, and all that is merely of the earth and the flesh lost its hold on the spirit of his life, and his desires, aims, and affections were caught up into unison with the supreme Will, he would be the revealer of the eternal ground of theology, and baptism

<sup>1</sup> Sessio tertia, cap. ii., and Canon *De Revelatione*, and *De Fide* 4.

in his spirit would become the theologian's prime qualification. And though such a one might not present religious truth with the exactness or the carefully arranged system which scientific theology demands, yet he would bear no doubtful witness to the highest truths, and his teaching would be full of the sublimest thought and the purest principles, supplying the philosopher with the most precious material on which to work, and reaching the mass of men with a power to which no systematized theology can pretend. Thus he would be both the way and the truth, and constitute as it were in his own person the one only mode of approach to the highest religious knowledge. To see him would be to see the Father ; and to wrangle about doctrines and evidences while his meek, yet lordly, spirit was still hidden from our eyes would be only to doom ourselves to darkness and error. Christians believe that such a one has existed, and that to him they owe, under God, all that is highest in their thought, holiest in their worship, and most faithful in their conduct, and that to show forth even in humblest measure the Spirit which through him has found and chosen them is their greatest honour and privilege.

This awakening of spiritual apprehension under the quickening influence of such an exalted and consecrated soul is that which alone deserves the name of revelation ; for it is the unveiling of spiritual truths and ideals, imparting a vision of a divine world, which can never again be wholly obscured. A revelation, in any high sense, involves not only a communication from without, but a removal of mental blindness, and an inward experience of realities previously hidden. So the Christian revelation is a shining in the heart, a 'light of the knowledge of the glory of God' : and this shining comes from the life and character and teaching of Christ, in whose face of love and compassion the Divine glory appeared, and in whose voice the accents of Divine pity and pardon were heard. Thus the religious consciousness becomes the Christian consciousness ; and as this is the



highest that I know, it will be my endeavour in what follows to interpret that consciousness with such clearness and insight as may be granted to me. Our expressions are partial and feeble, and describe inadequately even what we ourselves have seen ; and, like all knowledge, they must pass away, and be lost in a wider and holier prospect. But the light is eternal, and will shine more and more unto the perfect day. While we watch and wait for that meridian splendour, it will be a great reward if my imperfect labours help a few wanderers on their upward pilgrimage.

### CHAPTER III

### THE BIBLE

WE come now to the first of the two great sources of specifically Christian doctrine. Whatever position may be assigned to the Bible in the sacred literature of the world, for Christians of every school it occupies a unique place in their experience and regard. In some way it has helped to form our highest religious thought ; and it is necessary to frame a doctrine which will describe its proper function as a source of spiritual truth.

We must start with an examination of the traditional view. The dogma of the Catholic Church, as contained in the decree of the Council of Trent,<sup>1</sup> is not perfectly clear. It says that the 'truth and discipline' of the gospel 'are contained in written books and unwritten traditions,' and that 'one God is the author of both' the Old and the New Testament. The immediate object of the latter statement is to place the two Testaments on a par as regards their inspiration ; but if it be understood strictly, it implies the absolute infallibility of the Scriptures. This, accordingly, has been generally accepted by Catholics. 'Some few Catholic theologians have, indeed, maintained that the Scriptures may err *in minimis*—i.e., in small matters of historical detail, which in no way affect faith or morals. Nor in doing so do they contradict any express definition of Pope or council, though such an opinion has never obtained any currency in the

<sup>1</sup> Sessio quarta.



Church.’<sup>1</sup> It may be that the definition is not explicit because the infallibility of Scripture was not in question. The decree includes the Old Testament Apocrypha in the sacred and canonical books, and says that these books are to be accepted as they are contained ‘in the old vulgate Latin edition.’

The Vatican Council, which held four sessions, extending from 8 December, 1869, to 20 October, 1870, adopted, in its third session,<sup>2</sup> an article which seems intended to remove all ambiguity from the Tridentine decree. After referring to the declaration of the previous Council respecting the canonical books, the article proceeds as follows:— ‘But the Church holds these as sacred and canonical, not because, having been composed by human industry alone, they were afterwards approved by its authority; nor merely for this reason, because they contain a revelation without error; but because, being written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author, and as such have been delivered to the Church itself.’ An important clause is added, declaring that ‘In matters of faith and morals, pertaining to the building up of Christian doctrine, that is to be considered the true sense of sacred Scripture which holy mother Church has held and holds, whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the sacred Scriptures; and therefore it is not allowable for anyone to interpret sacred Scripture itself contrary to this sense, or also contrary to the unanimous consent of the fathers.’<sup>3</sup>

The doctrine of the Church of England, being constructed in opposition to the Catholic doctrine of tradition, leaves the

<sup>1</sup> *Catholic Dictionary*, by Addis and Arnold, 3rd ed., p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> Cap. ii.

<sup>3</sup> The recent Decree of the Roman Inquisition, approved and confirmed by Pope Pius X, condemns, among others, the following proposition:— ‘*Inspiratio divina non ita ad totam Scripturam Sacram extenditur, ut omnes et singulas eius partes ab omni errore praemuniat.*’ Thus the absolute infallibility of the Bible is affirmed.

kind and degree of Biblical inspiration quite undefined ; and nevertheless there seems to be an underlying assumption that the Scriptures are infallible. The sixth Article, 'Of the Sufficiency of Holy Scripture for salvation,' runs thus :— 'Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation : so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of holy Scripture we do understand those Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.' Then follows a list of the books. Of the Apocrypha it is said, 'The other books (as Hierome saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners ; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine.' It is evident that this Article was framed in order to make clear the points in which the Church of England differed from the Church of Rome. Accordingly no doctrine of inspiration is laid down ; but it seems fully implied that the canonical Scriptures were to be regarded as at least an infallible source of doctrine, for it is in this sense that they are contrasted with the Apocrypha, and they are treated as the one source of every necessary article of the faith.

The Westminster Confession declares that God is 'the author' of holy Scripture, which 'is to be received because it is the word of God' ; and it expresses an 'assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof.' It says that the Old Testament in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek, were 'immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages.'<sup>1</sup> Here, then, the infallibility of the Bible is asserted without any qualification.

This, when we think of it, is a stupendous doctrine, and one which might well seem incapable of proof. But before criticizing it, it may be useful to inquire how it ever arose.

<sup>1</sup> Chapter I.



Its ultimate source must be found in the religious power of large portions of the Bible. The prophets spoke as men to whom the word of God came, laying it upon them to deliver even at the cost of their lives, a Divine message. The Law came as a series of commandments from God himself, enforcing on the people the requirements of Divine righteousness. The interpreters of such a law could not call it in question. Their function could not go beyond deciding on its meaning and application. For them it was necessarily an infallible code of morals; and when the books containing it were combined with the prophetic and other writings into a canon, it was natural that the religious veneration which was called forth by the grandest sections should be extended to the whole, and the Scriptures of the Old Testament be placed by themselves as a unique and sacred literature.<sup>1</sup> From this to the belief in their infallibility was an easy step in an uncritical age, when the voice of prophets was silent, and men looked back through a haze of religious glory to an heroic age, in which God was closer to the human heart, and spoke to his servants as a man speaks to his friend. The tendency to such a belief receives striking illustration from the view which was taken of the LXX. The story which ascribed to it a miraculous correctness obtained ready credence, and even a thinker like Philo treats it as though it were verbally inspired. It is well known that there were difficulties in the way of this Jewish doctrine, and some passages in the Bible, if literally understood, fell far below the religion and intelligence of the time. These difficulties were evaded by the system of allegorical interpretation; and the more puerile any narrative appeared, the more certain it was that it must contain, for the initiated, some sublime philosophical truth.

From the Jews the doctrine of Biblical infallibility passed into Christianity. Christ himself appeals to the authority

<sup>1</sup> See details and authorities in Schürer, *Gesch. des jüd. Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*: dritte Aufl., ii. pp. 305 sqq.

of Scripture, but nevertheless he treats it with singular freedom. Both to him and to the greatest of his early followers religion was a thing of the spirit, not of the letter, and its greatest truths were written, not on the ancient tables of stone, but on the living tables of the heart.<sup>1</sup> But the less spiritual minds were unable to enter into this view, and the Church at large Judaized to the extent of accepting the Old Testament as an infallible external authority, which, by the help of allegory, could be forced to support the views of the theologians. Then arose the need of an authoritative court of appeal in controversies with heretics, and the New Testament Canon was formed, and invested with the attribute of infallibility which belonged to the Old. There were indeed differences of opinion as to the precise nature and range of inspiration ; but, speaking generally, the Scriptures were looked upon as an infallible standard of truth, from which there could be no appeal.<sup>2</sup> The Greek Church, however, did not follow the Western in including the apocryphal writings of the Old Testament in the Canon, though it accepted them as useful for edification.

At the Reformation the Protestants not only retained the traditional view of the Bible, but were led to emphasize it through their desire to return to primitive Christian truth, and their consequent insistence that the Bible was the sole rule of faith and practice. They were therefore distinguished from the Catholics by the following denials :—they did not acknowledge the authority of tradition ; they did not include the Apocrypha in the Canon ; they did not concede

<sup>1</sup> See further particulars in my Hibbert Lectures.

<sup>2</sup> The general opinion is well expressed by Augustine (*Epistola* xix) : ‘ Ego enim fateor caritati tuæ, solis eis Scripturarum libris, qui jam Canonici appellantur, didici hunc timorem honoremque deferre, ut nullum eorum autorem scribendo aliquid errasse firmissime credam. Ac si aliquid in eis offendero litteris, quod videatur contrarium veritati, nihil aliud quam vel mendosum esse Codicem, vel interpretem non assecutum esse quod dictum est, vel me minime intellexisse, non ambigam.’ I owe the reference to Wetstein, *Animadv.* V. 3.



to the Church the exclusive right of interpretation, but insisted on the right of private judgment on that point; they did not admit the authority of the Vulgate, but looked upon the original languages alone as authentic.

According to Gerhard, the most learned of the Lutheran dogmatists, the purity of doctrine was not preserved by tradition, but much that was alien and false became mixed with it; and therefore God caused his word, which had originally been propagated orally, to be set down in Scripture. There is no real difference between the word of God and Holy Scripture; for the latter contains nothing but the word of God, and it contains this completely, so that no word of God is to be found outside it.<sup>1</sup> The early Protestant dogmatists claim for Scripture the four following properties (*affectiones* or *proprietales*)—authority, perspicuity, sufficiency, efficacy. By virtue of its authority it is the ground and standard of faith, generating faith in the mind of the believer, and distinguishing the true and false in cases of controversy. Regarded in these two aspects, the authority is divided into *causativa* and *normativa*. By perspicuity it is meant that Scripture contains whatever is necessary for salvation in such clear expressions that no man of competent intelligence and enlightened spirit can fail to understand it. For him who is devoid of piety or ignorant of the language the perspicuity does not exist. The sufficiency of Scripture implies that it contains perfectly and fully everything that is needful for the attainment of eternal life, and that therefore tradition is not required to supplement Scripture, though it is admitted that some things are not explicit, but only implicit. Finally, its efficacy refers to its supernatural power of producing supernatural effects, converting, regenerating, and renewing the minds of men.<sup>2</sup>

This view of the Bible implies a theory of inspiration, conceived in its most extreme and mechanical form. This is

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by F. A. B. Nitzsch, *Lehrb. der evan. Dogmatik*, 1896, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Nitzsch, p. 208 sq., from whom the above is taken.

known as the hypothesis of verbal inspiration, according to which the nominal writers of the several books were merely passive instruments for recording the very words of the Holy Spirit. The *Formula Consensus Helvetici*, of 1675, actually goes so far as to say that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament is inspired both as regards the consonants and as regards the vowels or points or at least the signification of the points.<sup>1</sup> A less extreme hypothesis maintained that the writers were guarded by Divine 'direction' from all material error, but exercised their own special faculties in reducing the results of inspiration to literary form; and some even admitted the possibility of trifling errors in statements which did not affect the substance of revelation. Further details belong rather to the history of doctrine than to our present subject. I have given the foregoing particulars because it is right that we should clearly understand the doctrine which, till recent times, expressed the firm conviction of the most learned theologians, and still lingers among those who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

At the present time a great change is in progress, and men belonging to various churches are being driven from the old view by a variety of considerations. Science has banished the motionless earth, and the creation in six days a few thousand years ago. It has also destroyed the story of the fall, and extended the history of man back into dim ages, long before the mythical Adam. Criticism also has been doing its work, showing the uncertainty which rests upon the origin of several books, the complexity of their composition, and the legendary character of their contents. Comparative religion has greatly widened our knowledge of the spiritual forces of mankind, and by giving us a larger and more sympathetic outlook upon the world has made it impossible to separate the Bible from all other sacred literature in the absolute way which the ancient dogma

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Nitzsch, p. 216; also by Schaff, *A History of the Creeds of Christendom*, p. 487.



asserts. And lastly, the religious element itself is growing nearer to the mind of Christ, and is seeking for a higher and more spiritual view of inspiration.

In consequence of the opinions which I have thus briefly described it is necessary to begin our statement of doctrine with a negative proposition:—the Bible is not infallible.

It is not worth while examining in detail the arguments (if such they can be called) which are adduced in support of its infallibility. When we remember that the Bible is a collection of a large number of books, confessedly of very various human authorship, many of them of unknown authorship, written at different times, and gathered together into a Canon by we know not whom; and that these books have the most multifarious contents, scientific, historical, geographical, moral, religious, theological; we must see the enormous difficulty of proving that every line is the dictate of infinite wisdom. An appeal to their literary and religious value, and to the grand moral purpose which underlies them and gives to the whole a kind of spiritual unity, has not the slightest tendency to establish this position; and it is not wonderful that the Westminster Divines held that ‘the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very word of God.’<sup>1</sup> I admit the reality of the religious experience to which appeal is here made, and would speak with all reverence of the interior witness; yet I cannot but question the soundness of the inference. Take the strongest instance, when in times of deep emotion words of the Bible fall upon our ears as though the very voice of God spoke to our longing hearts. What is it that the Spirit testifies? Surely this, that the same Spirit breathed in the man who thus addresses us with such kindling power. The Spirit bears witness of spiritual things, not of outward fact and intellectual propositions; and, however natural it may be to a soul entranced with the sublime truths which it has found

<sup>1</sup> *Larger Catechism*, Qu. 4.

in the Bible, it is not a legitimate inference that the mind which has been moved to its depths by the Spirit of God, and carried thereby into inspired speech, is therefore secured from error, or raised above the current belief, within the intellectual realm. We can hardly doubt that it is owing to a precisely similar experience that the adherents of other religions have ascribed a perfect inspiration and supernatural authority to their sacred books, for instance to the Veda in India.

A less spiritual argument is founded upon certain statements in the Bible itself. It is clear that the general use which is made of the Old Testament in the New can be no evidence in the case unless the infallibility of the New be first proved. The first teachers of Christianity were not Biblical critics, and nothing could be more natural than that they should hold the accepted belief of their time, so far as it was not opposed to the new truth. What is really remarkable is the amount of freedom which they exercise towards the Old Testament, and how little Christ especially bases his teaching directly upon it. We must notice, however, a few particular passages which are most commonly relied upon.

In II Timothy iii. 16 we read *πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος*. The Revised Version renders this 'Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable.'<sup>1</sup> With this translation the passage vanishes from the controversy. But supposing the verse to state that the Old Testament was inspired, it tells us nothing of the extent of the inspiration. 'Inspired' does not mean 'infallible'; and it may be that inspiration has nothing to do with mere matters of fact.

In Hebrews i. 1 it is said that God spoke unto the fathers in the prophets. Truly so: but this does not say that everything which the prophets wrote was dictated by God.

<sup>1</sup> So the Clementine Vulgate translates, 'Omnis scriptura divinitus inspirata utilis est ad docendum.' Codex Am., however, reads, 'Omnis scriptura inspirata divinitus et utilis ad,' leaving the sense ambiguous as in the Greek.



In II Peter i. 21 we read that ‘no prophecy ever came by the will of man : but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.’ This Epistle is of doubtful genuineness, so that these words may only express the opinion of some unknown writer. But there is no difficulty in admitting the statement. The belief that the prophets of Israel delivered a Divine message is quite independent of the belief in their infallibility.

Finally, in John xiv. 26 Christ is reported as saying, ‘The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.’ This promise is limited to the Apostles, and says nothing about writings ; and if we take it strictly, it guarantees not only infallibility, but omniscience. We must not, however, interpret such passages as if they were hard little dogmas, but in sympathy with their setting and their spiritual purport.

The entire absence of proof that the Bible is infallible is in itself sufficient reason for rejecting so astounding a proposition. Dr. Hodge, indeed, asserts that the ‘*onus probandi* rests exclusively on’ those who deny the infallibility.<sup>1</sup> But this is surely unreasonable ; for though the dogma may have a prescriptive claim to our attention, it can have no claim to our acceptance apart from the proofs which it offers. It involves the supposition of a long series of miracles, so intrinsically improbable, and so unlike our general experience of the action of the Divine Spirit, that nothing short of overwhelming proof could render them credible to an unbiased mind ; and I believe it is only the weight of long tradition, embodied in early education, which makes it possible for learned and candid men to maintain the ecclesiastical doctrine. We must, however, glance for a moment at the positive evidence that the Bible is not infallible.

This evidence is furnished by a careful examination of

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines of Theology*, 1879, p. 76.

the contents of the Bible. We must here assume the results of various Biblical studies. Using the most cautious judgment that we can, we find in the Bible inconsistencies and improbabilities which are fatal to the notion of infallibility ; and this, not in one or two instances, which might be explained away, but in a large number of particulars, forming a cumulative proof. Dr. Hodge has an ingenious way of getting over this difficulty. The objector 'must prove,' among other things, 'that the alleged discrepant statement certainly occurred in the veritable autograph copy of the inspired writing containing it.'<sup>1</sup> This is a grand controversial weapon ; for the autographs are lost. It is, however, a weapon which turns and cuts the hand that wields it ; for if we do not know what was originally written, the infallible authority of the existing Bible is gone, and the belief in the infallibility of perished autographs becomes a pious, but fruitless opinion. It is surely much more reasonable to suppose, with the Westminster Divines, that, if God ever gave to the world an infallible book, it was 'by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages' ; for, if God himself was the author of a book, it is inconceivable that he would hand it over to instantaneous interpolation and corruption. And in fact the labours of textual criticism have guaranteed the genuineness of the text, at least in the New Testament, sufficiently for the purposes of this inquiry ; and an impartial examination is slowly beating down the inherited belief, and inducing a large number of men in various churches to look on the fallibility of Scripture as now demonstrated.<sup>2</sup>

The change thus introduced into theological thought is

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines of Theology*, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> To the reader to whom these questions are new it may be sufficient to suggest that he should thoughtfully consider the eschatological predictions in the Gospels, and should compare the birth-stories in Matthew and Luke, and the several accounts of the resurrection, and the science implied in the Old Testament with the results of modern investigation.



nothing less than a revolution. The Bible can no longer be regarded as the miraculous exponent of a dogmatic revelation. The contents of its several parts must be tested like the contents of other ancient books. The belief of a prophet or Apostle cannot be accepted as final, without considering the mental conditions amid which he lived and the intrinsic nature of the belief itself. It is necessary to state this plainly, because the magnitude of the change is often slurred over, and men seem afraid to face the consequences of their own investigation. The simple fact is that the Protestant basis of theology has crumbled to pieces, and men are once more thrown back on a religion of the Spirit, and forced to listen to the living voice of God within their own souls.

Nevertheless it does not follow that the Bible is not of supreme value in the formation of theological doctrine. We must now remember what has been said about the religious nature of man. Whatever awakens and exalts that nature improves the organ by which we apprehend spiritual truth, and refines our power of judging among doctrines that are offered to our acceptance. The Bible may fulfil this office, and not only bring before us a vast variety of teaching, but supply the spiritual discernment which must be exercised in the reception of that teaching.

I will lay down, then, the following proposition :—The Bible is of inestimable importance in the construction of doctrine, through its power of forming and nurturing our religious character and faith.

The value of the Bible as the Christian book of devotion belongs to another head ; here I must touch only on those points which relate to our present subject.

We may remark, then, in the first place, that man needs religious help and guidance. This appears from our own consciousness of this need. We are aware of our liability to error and sin ; and often in our most religious moods we feel most our own incompetence, and receive with gratitude the needed direction and comfort from the advice and teach-

ing of another. It appears also from the great errors which have prevailed in religion, combined with the fact that men seek and obtain assistance from minds higher than their own. No one will suppose that the prophets of Israel spent their strength for nought, or were of no use in quickening the life of their people, and awakening them to a persistent faith in one holy God. Nor will anyone think that the first preachers of Christianity had no influence in producing the religious change which then occurred in the Roman empire, or that the Christian faith is not intrinsically higher than the heathenism which it superseded.

Now the Bible supplies this want by appealing to the religious element in our nature, by giving form and expression to our vague and imperfect religious feelings and thoughts, and by impressing us with the authority of men who had the largest share of the Divine Spirit. The appeal is made in ways too various to be classified, as so much depends on the temperament and wants of individuals. Sometimes a single text, falling in with a certain state of feeling, has been sufficient to change a life. The picture which is given in the New Testament of the love of Christ has probably had the largest effect in awakening the better spirit in man. But the Bible, being a literature extending over many centuries, addresses itself to wants of every kind, and, while here it bends to the simplicity of childhood, there it soars to the highest thought of manhood. And not only does it make this appeal; it gives form and expression to our religious thought. Though it is not a work of systematic theology, the great lines of morality are laid down in it with unmistakable clearness, and various religious doctrines are set forth with the utmost lucidity and beauty, and, like 'good money-changers,' we select those which are of eternal value, and let others drop out of sight. And lastly, we own the authority of men who drank more deeply at the fountains of Divine life than ourselves. Without any dogma of infallibility we can believe devoutly that Paul



and John, and, above all, Christ, were spiritually nearer God than we ; and this belief gives peculiar impressiveness to their words. We revere them no less as teachers because we listen to them with open and discriminating minds, and allow some things, as being local and temporary, to pass away.

It may be said that other religious books have a similar effect, and that therefore our doctrine ought to embrace religious literature generally. This is to a certain extent true, and I can even suppose that individuals are occasionally much more moved by other writings than they have ever been by the Bible. But the Bible has a unique historical position, and a catholicity of influence to which no other works in Christendom can pretend. And thus it has another quickening authority, for which men often long, the natural and just authority of many generations of devout souls who have found in its pages the secret of eternal life ; and, as we read the prayer of a Psalmist, or a Prophet's call to righteousness, or an Apostle's outpouring of sublime thought, or beatitudes and parables of the Master, we not only perceive the inmost soul of one inspired man, but we hear the voice of an innumerable multitude testifying that these things are true. And independently of this universal influence, since it contains the archives of the Christian faith, the first-fruits of that new life which came into the world in Christ, the Christian theologian, without referring to the intensity and purity of inspiration which mark its finest pages, is obliged to assign it a place apart.

The Bible's highest value to us consists in this, that it makes known to us the mind of Christ, and helps us to receive his spirit, which is the indispensable basis of Christian theology. It is, of course, only from the pages of the New Testament, interpreted through spiritual sympathy, that we can come to understand this spirit. Its characteristics must be learned primarily from the Gospels, which contain the record of his life and teaching. But much can be learned, secondarily, from the rest of the New Testament, which



discloses the earliest impressions produced by his doctrine and personality. When the mind has been steeped in that spirit, so as to find in it an abiding power of life and thought, there arises what has been termed the Christian consciousness, by which, as we have already seen, is meant the kind of spiritual character which is formed under Christian influences, and becomes in us a standard of spiritual judgment. He that is spiritual judges all things, because his manhood is complete, and spontaneously rejects that which is low, and accepts that which is high and worthy of the children of God. Thus, it seems to me, the test of Christian doctrine must be found in Christ's spirit as a whole, rather than in the exact words in which his teaching is recorded, and which are liable to the errors of transmission and translation, and may sometimes require a mind natively Oriental to extract from the figurative expression the precise meaning which was intended. It cannot be proved by arguments appealing simply to the intellect that this spirit is the loftiest for our humanity, and the uniting bond of God and man. The witness is within, and cannot be communicated except through that mysterious process by which the spirit of one man appeals to and passes into another. One can only hope that through the whole course of our exposition, and especially through the section on Christology, this will become apparent; and meanwhile we must frequently appeal to passages of Scripture as containing the highest teaching on spiritual themes.

According to this view, then, the spirit of Christ is the criterion whereby we distinguish the spurious and the genuine, and which we carry back into the reading of the Bible itself, judging even the fiery zeal of Elijah by that crucial test. It is in him, rather than on the written page, that we see the word of God. We are his disciples, not disciples of the Bible; and we refuse to be separated from him because we cannot help believing that even his thought, as reported to us, is not always free from the limitations



of his day. We rest in the great things, the grand impression of the whole, the broad and elevated teaching, the original thought, the commanding, yet gentle and balanced, personality.

It follows from the doctrine which has been laid down that, in the construction of Christian theology, we must look upon the Bible, and especially the New Testament, as a primary source ; for it is there that we find the earliest expression of Christian faith, and the richest treasure of spiritual thought ; and if we have to use discrimination and criticism, it must be the discrimination of the spiritual mind, which approaches these subjects with a tender reverence, and with a pure devotion to the Lord of truth.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHURCH

IN this chapter we have to consider the Church solely as a source of doctrine, reserving other questions affecting it for future discussion.

The Greek Church, which claims, since the Latin schism, to be alone orthodox and genuine, derives the authority of its dogmas not only from Scripture, but also from tradition and the teaching of the councils and fathers.<sup>1</sup> The Church of Rome recognizes the same twofold source, and its doctrine of an infallible tradition has been more fully elaborated, and more directly concerns us in Western Christendom. We may therefore limit our attention to the latter.

The Roman Catholic Church has always claimed the possession of dogmatic infallibility, supernaturally conferred ; and in recent times it has been decided that this infallibility resides in the Roman Pontiff. The latest definition of this prerogative was pronounced by the Vatican Council in 1870. It is as follows :—‘ We, faithfully adhering to the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith, for the glory of God our Saviour, the exaltation of the Catholic religion, and the salvation of Christian peoples, the Sacred Council approving, teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed ; that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when, discharging the office of Pastor and Doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme

<sup>1</sup> Mogilas, Ὁρθόδοξος ὁμολογία, ἀπόκρισις 4.



apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, by the Divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, the same is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals ; and that, therefore, the definitions, of this sort, of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves irreformable, and not dependent upon the consent of the Church.’<sup>1</sup>

We must observe carefully the limited range of the infallibility claimed for the Pope, the limitations applying in substance to the decisions of councils. He is infallible only in questions of faith or morals, and in them only when he speaks as the official teacher of all Christians, when he is exercising his apostolic authority, and when he is laying down a proposition to be held by the entire Church. It is clear that the infallibility may be very rarely exercised, and that there is ample room for papal error without affecting the faith of Catholics. We must add that the Church does not claim inspiration, such as belonged to the Apostles, but what is technically known as *assistentia*, by which under certain conditions it is preserved from error. It therefore does not pretend to reveal any new truths, but only to guard the original deposit, the revealed truth which was given once for all by Christ and his Apostles, and to define with

<sup>1</sup> It may be convenient to have the original words : ‘ Nos traditioni a fidei Christianae exordio perceptae fideliter inhaerendo, ad Dei Salvatoris nostri gloriam, religionis Catholicae exaltationem et Christianorum populorum salutem, sacro approbante Concilio, docemus et divinitus revelatum dogma esse definimus : Romanum Pontificem, cum ex Cathedra loquitur, id est, cum omnium Christianorum Pastoris et Doctoris munere fungens pro suprema sua Apostolica auctoritate doctrinam de fide vel moribus ab universa Ecclesia tenendam definit, per assistentiam divinam, ipsi in beato Petro promissam, ea infallibilitate pollere, qua divinus Redemptor Ecclesiam suam in definienda doctrina de fide vel moribus instructam esse voluit ; ideoque ejusmodi Romani Pontificis definitiones ex sese, non autem ex consensu Ecclesiae, irreformabiles esse.’ The usual anathema is appended.

absolute accuracy the contents of that deposit, when any particular article is challenged by heresy or is felt to be obscure by churchmen themselves. Thus, according to the Catholic view, papal infallibility existed, and was known to exist, on the authority of Christ himself, from the days of St. Peter, though it has received its formal definition only within living memory.

This dogma rests logically upon certain beliefs, which may be thus stated: (1) that Christ made an infallible dogmatic revelation; (2) that this was communicated by him to the Apostles, to be delivered by them to the Church<sup>1</sup>; (3) that, in order to secure the correct transmission of what was revealed, he delegated his dogmatic infallibility, within defined

<sup>1</sup> The Catholic view of tradition was thus defined by the Council of Trent (Sessio quarta): 'Hanc veritatem et disciplinam contineri in libris scriptis, et sine scripto traditionibus, quae ipsius Christi ore ab Apostolis acceptae, aut ab ipsis Apostolis, Spiritu Sancto dictante, quasi per manus traditae, ad nos usque pervenerunt.' This statement was reaffirmed by the Vatican Council (Sessio tertia, Cap. ii). The following statement, justifying the decree of infallibility, is taken from the proceedings of the Vatican Council (Sessio quarta, Cap. iv). 'Sanctam Romanam Ecclesiam summum et plenum primatum et principatum super universam Ecclesiam catholicam obtinere, quem se ab ipso Domino in beato Petro, Apostolorum principe sive vertice, cujus Romanus Pontifex est successor, cum potestatis plenitudine recepisse veraciter et humiliter recognoscit. . . . Neque enim Petri successoribus Spiritus Sanctus promissus est, ut eo revelante novam doctrinam patefacerent, sed ut, eo assistente, traditam per Apostolos revelationem seu fidei depositum sancte custodirent et fideliter exponerent.' The texts appealed to in support of this position are, 'Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church,' and 'I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, and thou, when converted, strengthen thy brethren.' In accordance with this view, the recent Decree condemns the following propositions:—'Revelatio, objectum fidei catholicae constituens, non fuit cum Apostolis completa'; 'Christus determinatum doctrinae corpus omnibus temporibus cunctisque hominibus applicabile non docuit, sed potius inchoavit motum quemdam religiosum diversis temporibus ac locis adaptatum vel adaptandum.' Thus, whatever development there may be in the statement of dogmas, there can be none in their substance.



limits, to Peter; (4) that this passed from Peter to his episcopal successors; and (5) that these successors are the Bishops of Rome. These statements are believed to be proved by adequate historical evidence. They are all open to objection.

1. The Gospels nowhere imply that Jesus made a dogmatic revelation. He undoubtedly taught great religious truths; but he did so in a broad and prophetic way, not in the manner of a theologian. His teachings bear no resemblance to a catechism or a creed. Indeed it is this obvious defect in his teaching that has rendered necessary the doctrine of tradition. If it had been Christ's purpose to communicate a dogmatic revelation, he would have followed (we must suppose) a different plan, and have written down his dogmas once for all, and handed them in this imperishable form to his Apostles. And again, with reverence be it said, the conviction is growing that Jesus himself was not infallible; and many candid and pious men are now able to save their orthodoxy only through the doctrine of kenosis.<sup>1</sup> Disciples are finding themselves obliged to admit that in some references to the Old Testament, in the acceptance of demoniacal possession, perhaps in some utterances regarding his second advent—things not unconnected with faith and morals—he was influenced by the mistaken opinions belonging to his time.

2. The different types of thought in the New Testament, though I think the differences have been a good deal exaggerated, are hardly consistent with the idea that the Apostles had gone through a dogmatic drill, and each possessed and taught the same complete body of dogma. The unity which we observe is that of great spiritual and ethical principles (though there were controversies even about some of these); and there is no reason to doubt that the same broad outlines of doctrine were taught everywhere, and handed down in the churches, but not without additions and fluctuations. But there is nothing in the New Testament to sanction the belief in an esoteric tradition committed by Jesus to his Apostles.

<sup>1</sup> This doctrine will be discussed further on.

Indeed it is expressly denied ; for the fourth Evangelist declares that Jesus said to the high-priest, ‘ I have spoken openly to the world. I taught always in a synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews assemble, and in secret I spoke nothing.’<sup>1</sup>

3. The infallibility of Peter is supposed to be guaranteed by Matthew xvi. 18, 19. These are strong and remarkable words, which will be noticed more fully in another connexion. But it is very strange that, if they express an indispensable dogma of Christianity, they occur only here, although all the Gospels contain the confession of Peter and refer to Christ’s rejoinder. This places the words under some critical disability. Moreover, if we accept them as a genuine utterance, they do not say that Peter will be miraculously secured against dogmatic error, but refer rather to legislative and administrative functions.

4. There is not a word to indicate that the supposed infallibility was to be transmitted from Peter to his successors. This, therefore, must rest upon tradition, which in its turn can be guaranteed only by the infallibility which it is called in to support.

5. Still less is there anything in the saying of Christ to connect the infallibility with Rome and its Bishops. Here again we are thrown back on a precarious tradition. Thus the dogma of infallibility rests ultimately on a tradition extending through eighteen centuries ; and the correct interpretation of this tradition depends on the infallibility.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John xviii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> The history of the establishment of papal authority must be read elsewhere ; but I may refer to two interesting points connected with tradition. Origen, who was well acquainted with the traditions of the Church, in commenting on the passage in Matthew, not only makes no reference to Rome, but expressly denies that the Church was built on Peter alone, and argues that the blessing pronounced on Peter is applicable to all who, like him, make the same confession, through the revelation of the heavenly Father’s light in the heart (*Com. in Matth.* Tom. xii. 10, 11). The disputed 28th Canon of the Council of Chalcedon claims for the Church



It thus appears that, while, if we admit an original dogmatic revelation, there is some *a priori* probability that provision would be made for its correct transmission, the actual dogma of infallibility depends on a thin chain of reasoning, which ends in a vicious circle. It cannot therefore, be maintained that the demonstration is so complete as to preclude the legitimacy of criticizing the dogmas to which the organ of infallibility gives its sanction ; for these, or some of them, might be so improbable as far to outweigh the probability by which the fundamental dogma itself was established. Consequently Catholic dogmas are severally open to investigation by the methods which are properly applicable to such inquiries. At present we may notice a few general considerations which render the dogma of infallibility improbable.

I. The dogmas pronounced fundamental and essential by the infallible authority, would surely appear plainly in the teaching of Christ. It is quite true that the Church existed before the New Testament Scriptures, and that we ought not to look for a full exposition of the Christian system in the Epistles, which were written on special occasions for limited purposes ; but the case is very different with Christ's own teaching, and we must suppose that the Evangelists recorded what they believed to be of supreme importance. Yet the leading dogmas, including that of infallibility, are either absent altogether, or alluded to in such a vague and uncertain way that the passages supposed to refer to them are quite susceptible of a different interpretation. And not

of Constantinople equal prerogatives with that of Rome ; and the remarkable thing is that in both cases the claim is not based on apostolic succession, but is made to depend entirely on the imperial position of the two cities. As the new Rome had equal political privileges with the older city, so it should have an equal ecclesiastical position (see the Canon in Labbe IV., 1692 sq. My attention was directed to these passages by Professor Allen, *Christian Institutions*, pp. 186, 193). The Eastern Church, which also relies on tradition, remains a permanent protest against the pretensions of Rome.

only is this the case, but it appears to many men who are not devoid of calm intelligence and clear religious insight, that the spirit of Christ's teaching (and we may extend the remark to his Apostles) is essentially antagonistic to the whole sacerdotal and sacramental conception of the Roman Church.

2. The history of doctrine exhibits all the phenomena of gradual and uncertain growth. So indisputable is this fact that Catholic theologians have to admit that individual teachers were often imperfect, and sometimes even erred, in their statement of the Church's creed. But the historical facts carry us far beyond this admission. The uniform tradition, to which Irenæus and Tertullian appeal, relates to a few great and simple articles, which they maintained against the subtle speculations of the Gnostics; and the more elaborate statement in Origen's *De Principiis* falls immensely short of the Catholic system. When we pass to a later age, when theological doctrine was becoming more complex, we find a wide divergence of opinion among theologians ostensibly Catholic, and the most momentous questions are decided, not by the unanimous voice of Christendom declaring the contents of a uniform tradition, but by the votes of majorities, whose will was enforced by the secular power. Yet through all the period of controversy the episcopal guardians of tradition must have known that the Pope was infallible, and they had only to appeal to Rome to have their disputes determined by a voice that could not err; or, if they did not know it, we must ask what had become of the apostolic tradition, and what is the use of an infallibility that is not recognized, and allows the Church to go to pieces in stormy disputation instead of silencing the strife of tongues by a pronouncement which all must respect? The supposed infallibility failed to preserve the unity of Christendom. Things went on their way as though no Divine provision had been made for maintaining a uniform doctrine, and not only were more or less considerable minorities cast off, and thrust into the position of sects,



but East and West parted company, and finally a large part of the West withdrew from an authority which, rightly or wrongly, appeared to the seceders to have lost the genuine marks of Christianity. Even when the dogma of papal infallibility was at last propounded, some of the most learned theologians retired in sorrow from the Church which they loved. This complete failure of the infallible authority to secure uniformity of doctrine, and to establish itself with some real approach to universality, is hardly conceivable, if it was constituted by the solemn act of Christ himself, and was therefore included as fundamental in the primitive tradition.

3. It is admitted that Catholics themselves have fallen under grievous errors. The diabolical tortures of the Inquisition ; the belief in witchcraft, with its long train of judicial murders ; the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and other kindred horrors ; the condemnation of Galileo :—all these, if not sanctioned by Popes under the conditions required by their infallibility, nevertheless were not stopped or rebuked by them. What is the good of an infallible authority which leaves its subjects a prey to degrading superstitions and fiendish cruelty, and has to wait on the progress of a freer religion and a worldly science to bring it to a better state of mind ?

I have not dwelt on alleged contradictions between the decisions of different Popes ; for it is always possible in such cases to maintain that the requisite conditions of infallibility were not present, and the private opinion of a Pope, however valuable, is not exempt from the human liability to error. We reject the dogma on account of the weakness of the evidence on which it depends, and the strong improbabilities which may be urged against it.

The Protestant bodies have unanimously discarded the dogma of the Church's infallibility. We may notice the views of the Church of England and of the Presbyterian Church, which occupy rather an ambiguous position. The twentieth Article of the former says, ' The Church hath . . . authority



in controversies of faith : and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another.' This, as far as I can see, a Catholic might accept ; for of course he does not believe that there can be any contrariety between Scripture and tradition. The article is of little value, since it does not define the organ of ecclesiastical authority, or the criterion by which its decisions must be judged. The succeeding article makes the subject still more obscure, for it sets aside what had hitherto been regarded as the highest authority available. It says, ' General Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of Princes. And when they be gathered together (for as much as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God) they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture.' We naturally ask, declared by whom ? It cannot be by the Council itself, because the Council may err ; and therefore we are thrown back ultimately upon every man's private judgment, and the alleged authority of the Church in controversies of faith disappears.

The doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter xxv, leaves us in even greater bewilderment. It says, ' The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel, (not confined to one nation, as before under the law,) consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children ; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. Unto this catholic visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world ; and doth by his own presence and Spirit,



according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.' Nevertheless we are told that 'the purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error ; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan.' This leaves the Church entirely without any collective organ of expression, and makes it impossible to trust the decisions of individual churches, which may happen to be synagogues of Satan. We are therefore thrown back on the infallibility of Scripture, which, however, is ultimately authenticated, not by the Church, but by the 'inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts.'<sup>1</sup> The only function allowed to the Church is that 'we may be moved and induced by' its 'testimony' 'to a high and reverent esteem of the holy Scripture.' 'The supreme Judge,' it is said, 'by which all controversies of religion are to be determined . . . can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.' But then who is to decide what it is that the Holy Spirit means, when different interpretations are given ? Is not a solemn assembly of learned bishops more likely to be correct than a group of ignorant tinkers and cobblers ?

Must we acquiesce in this result, or can we find any function for the dogmas of the Church within the domain of a scientific theology which has been forced to abandon the old basis of infallibility ? We may venture to lay down the following proposition :—The dogmas of the Church, whether they express the contents of an original revelation in a more or less imperfect form, or are the result of earnest speculative and constructive thought, are deeply impressive as embodying the belief held by a vast body of religious men in different countries and through many ages, and they carry with them the natural authority of spiritual devotion, high character, and wide reception.

From this point of view the authority is similar to that which we recognize in other sciences. We never start our

<sup>1</sup> Chapter I.

investigations as though there were no accumulated body of knowledge, and as though no one had theorized effectively before us. We build upon the foundations which have been laid by our predecessors ; but nevertheless, in all sciences which are not mathematically demonstrative, previous observations are liable to correction by more exact methods, and past theories are liable to be dissipated by increased knowledge. So in religion it is reasonable for the mass of men, who are not specially educated in the subject, to rely upon the trained theologians ; and he who would himself be an expert ought to treat with deference the opinions which are commended to him by a vast amount of reasoned conviction, and to make these the starting-points of his science, not indeed pledging himself to them as infallible axioms, but accepting, rejecting, or modifying them after due study of the evidence. Thus we do not start like some primeval savage, with no inherited experience behind us ; but we find the ground mapped out, and the great problems of religious thought presented to us in an orderly system, and with at least a provisional solution.

The authority thus described, which I have called natural, in opposition to the supernatural authority claimed by the Catholic Church, cannot be limited to the members of a single denomination, but belongs to all theologians in proportion to their competence. One of the conditions of this authority is mental freedom. An inquiry which is forced, under penalties, to arrive at prescribed results is not genuine ; and the individual assent which is given in submission either to an outward demand or to a deeply instilled prejudice, is of no value. The boasted unanimity of Catholic theologians ceases to be impressive as soon as we remember that all dissentients were *ipso facto* excluded from the Church, and that numbers of competent men have been unable to accept their conclusions. Thus the coercion arising out of the claim to supernatural authority has almost destroyed the natural authority which otherwise might have so much



weight, and ordinary men turn with greater confidence to the freer theologians who are found among the protestant sects. These last, however, have also resorted far too much to a system of compulsion; and hence has arisen, in the minds of many, an undue deference to those theologians who set themselves against received opinions, as though they alone uttered the oracles of unfettered scholarship.

There is another way in which the Church influences, indirectly, the formation of doctrine, namely, by its cultivation of the religious life. I use the word Church here in a large sense, of the general body of professing Christians, and especially of those, wherever found, who have manifested the finest and deepest character, and so approached most nearly the ideal of the Christian spirit. We have seen that the theology of individuals and of sects is affected by the quality of the inward life, of which it is, in part, the intellectual expression. We have seen also that the religious element in man is subject to growth, and slowly reaches higher degrees of perfection. The grand conceptions and aspirations of a spiritual monotheism require ages for their development; and accordingly the Church, quite apart from its teaching of particular doctrines, has an educative function in giving greater depth, power, and purity to the religious life, and so creating, or at least bringing into consciousness, the interior data on which a spiritual theology must be reared. We cannot apply this indirect influence at the moment when doctrines come severally under discussion; but by placing ourselves in sympathetic contact with the saints and heroes of Christianity, and (I may add) of other faiths, and so imbibing the deepest life of the Church, we strengthen and purify the organ of spiritual perception, and bring to each question such catholicity of mind and impartiality of judgment as the inevitable limitations of our mortal nature will permit.

From this survey of the sources we must now proceed to the construction of our body of doctrine.

## PART II

# DOCTRINE OF GOD

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### CHAPTER I

#### PRIMARY CONCEPTIONS OF GOD

IN proceeding to the doctrine of God I must assume that the more important questions connected with his existence, and with the intellectual idea which we form of him as the supreme Cause, will be studied, if my readers are so inclined, in books on the philosophy of religion.<sup>1</sup> Here we are concerned with the more distinctively religious aspects of the subject, and with dogmas characteristically Christian.

Intellectual belief about God is not faith, and apart from the experiences and demands of man's religious nature the problems of theism, pantheism, and materialism would have merely a scientific interest. But in fact these problems go down into the deep places of our being ; and while a discovery that the Newtonian law of gravitation was fallacious would excite our curiosity, and, if adequately proved, would soon be welcomed as an advance in science, a demonstration that there was no God would seem to rend us in two, and leave the higher part of us forsaken and dead. The source of faith is found in the activity of the religious element ;

<sup>1</sup> I may commend to the student the excellent *Selections from the Literature of Theism*, by Drs. Caldecott and Mackintosh, 1904, where he can read the arguments of several eminent thinkers, presented in copious extracts, and accompanied by useful notes.



and the intellectual arguments in support of theism are chiefly valuable in removing difficulties which put too severe a strain upon the pure heart and simple conscience. I suggest therefore the following proposition :—

The reality of God is implied throughout the whole range of the religious nature, which exists in relation to him, and seeks a supreme object of veneration, love, and worship.

This proposition is not invalidated by the phenomena of religious history. We have seen that the religious element is of slow growth, putting forth tentative efforts, and feeling after God if haply it may find him ; and if religion began in the worship of ghosts or of dead ancestors, or of local and partial deities, still, if it was religion, it must have looked on these as superior to the worshipper, and the undeveloped instinct must have found some sort of satisfaction in the payment of this imperfect homage. But as the nature expanded, its vision was enlarged ; and even as art grew from rude scratchings on a bone up to the masterpieces of Raphael, so religion grew from the dim guesses and rude ceremonies of the savage up to the worship of the infinite Spirit in spirit and in truth.

To the general and constant testimony of the religious element we must add more special and occasional experiences, which come in moments of high exaltation when men seem drawn into the more intimate presence of God, and the Divine call appeals to them with a clearness and power that cannot be resisted. We see prophets and saints filled with an energy of conviction which the world in arms could not daunt or silence. We see Christ, with his balanced character and his calm reasonableness, so assured of his life in God that his faith has become a quickening power for millions of men. And there is that within us which is akin to these things, at least a glow of admiration, chords which vibrate with responsive music, a voice whose tones become articulate as we listen to the words of these transcendent souls.

We must now go a step further, and say that the Divine



Object thus postulated by the religious nature must be regarded as personal.

There are phases of religious sentiment, or at least of sentiment closely akin to the religious, which are satisfied without the idea of personality; for instance, the feelings which arise when we contemplate the infinite, the sublime, the mysterious, the beautiful. I am not indeed sure that even these feelings do not betoken personality, and that mere size and form and colour could not waken them unless there were at least an undefined consciousness of a spiritual presence manifested through them all. There are, however, men who cherish what they regard as religious sentiment, and think it of great importance, and nevertheless have no acknowledged belief in a personal God. Such is the case, for example, with the Positivists. Nothing is gained by denying the name of religion to this position. Whether it be religion or not is a question of words; and we may see in it a strong testimony to the ineradicable presence of the religious element, and its demand for at least a minimum of faith. Feelings dwarfed by intellectual doubt, or denied their legitimate expression, will in time assert their power, unfold their contents, and find their genuine satisfaction in theistic belief.

But if we grant that there are religious sentiments which stop short of a personal object, there are others more distinctly and certainly religious which have no meaning apart from the personal Spirit in whom they rest. Trust, love, worship, cannot rest in anything beneath personality, and in their supreme form have no satisfaction till they find it in their Source, the personal God who is in communion with the soul. An ideal of humanity which is only the abstract notion of departed virtue; an unconscious reason (if that phrase has any real meaning); 'a power not ourselves which makes for righteousness,' but is only a natural law or stream of tendency—never command the absolute devotion of the heart, or nourish the devoutest life of Christian saints.



Christ's faith in the Father was given in the very constitution of his own spirit.

The personality of God, however, is sometimes denied on the plea, not that he is infra-personal, but that he is supra-personal. In judging of this contention we must be very careful in the use of our terms. The word 'personal' is often used to denote that which is peculiar to some particular person, as when we speak of a personal bias or personal taste. 'Personality' sometimes describes that which is special to a given individual. To 'personate' is to pretend to be some one else. And the word person itself is employed to point out an individual separated from others by certain characteristics, as in the common phrases, 'the persons of a drama,' or 'having respect of persons.' Thus an idea of limitation comes to be attached to the term; and it would be possible to apply it to God in such a way as to signify only that he was a kind of magnified man, the greatest among many. But no theologian would thus apply it. When we attribute personality to God, we mean that he has in unlimited perfection that which distinguishes a person from a thing or from a mere animal. This distinctive mark we may analyze into self-consciousness, reason, and will. It is these that make us persons; and however limited they may be in us, and however dependent on limiting conditions for their development, they do not in themselves involve any limitation in the being to whom they belong. In speaking of these as attributes of God we do not mean that they have the imperfections which necessarily characterize them in finite beings, but rather that dwelling in us, as they do, in finite measure, they are real, though inadequate, revelations of the supreme perfection. They are the highest that we know; and if God is supra-personal in such a sense as to exclude these, we must adopt the agnostic position, and all supposed communion between the human mind and God must be regarded as delusion. It is for this reason that it seems important to insist on the personality of God. Apart



from it the deepest life of man becomes a riddle, and the grandest utterances of Psalmists and Prophets a jingle of unmeaning words.

The objection is indeed raised, from the side of agnosticism, that in ascribing our highest and distinctively personal attributes to God we are as irrational as an oyster would be which ascribed to him sensation. Such a metaphysical oyster would hardly belong to that lowly fraternity ; but we may accept the illustration. We do not attribute sensation to God, because it has its origin in a physical body ; and therefore our speculative oyster is supposed to be clearly wrong. But sensation, in spite of its origin, is a form of consciousness ; and as, by the hypothesis, it is the only form known to the disputants, I believe that the oyster which asserted it would be far nearer the truth than the oyster which denied it. We are capable of abstractions which are impossible to an oyster ; and so we can say that the high attributes which constitute our personality are revelations, or representative forms of that which is above all our thinking, but is not on that account less real. They are our participation in the Divine nature ; and while we know them in their finite action, we cannot know them in their infinite range or their eternal self-subsistence. A spark may give us a very imperfect, but still a true idea of the solar radiance. The warning, however, is valuable when theologians presume to announce the eternal economy of the Divine consciousness from the limiting conditions and methods which affect the consciousness of man.

Nevertheless it is necessary to subjoin a caution. If we speak of God as *a* person, we thereby place him in a class, as one of many individuals composing it ; and he becomes, in our thought, extraneous to us, as a being like ourselves, only on a vaster scale, and entering into moral relations with us, as a king or a judge might do who himself was bound by the same superlative law. But we cannot thus conceive of the Self-existent. God is a genus by himself, the underived



source of all being ; not one person among many, but the one only complete and absolute personality, through whose creative and inflowing life we, by participation, become persons. As Augustine says, 'He is what he has' (*id est quod habet*). He is not one of many rational or righteous beings, as though reason and the moral law were eternal principles outside of and above him ; but he is himself the perfect sum and inexhaustible Source of reason, righteousness, and love, and from that infinite sea we draw our tiny measures. 'In him we live and move and have our being.'<sup>1</sup>

But how God creates, and communicates of himself, and gives to his children to have life in themselves, so that they are moral and responsible persons, we cannot understand. Theology has laid it down that God is incomprehensible ; and he is most incomprehensible when we contemplate him from the highest peaks of faith, when we look into his eternity and infinity, within which all times, all worlds, are but as a passing dream. Yet on these things we may at least think and speculate, though we cannot comprehend ; but we cannot doubt that far beyond the confines of our thought stretches the limitless unknown, and a new spiritual sense would bring before us unimagined visions. As Cyril of Jerusalem expresses it, 'In things relating to God the confession of ignorance is great knowledge,'<sup>2</sup> or, in the words of

<sup>1</sup> For a philosophical defence of the personality of God see an article by J. B. Dalgairns, in the 'Contemporary Review,' Vol. XXIV. pp. 321 sqq. Consult also Lotze, *Microcosmus*, trans. by E. Hamilton and E. E. Constance Jones, Book IX, Chap. iv. ; and more briefly in *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, ed. by F. C. Conybeare, pp. 57 sqq. It is a satisfaction that my conclusion, reached independently, has the support of this distinguished thinker. He sums up, 'Perfect Personality is in God only, to all finite minds there is allotted but a pale copy thereof ; the finiteness of the finite is not a producing condition of this Personality but a limit and a hindrance of its development.' Vol. II, p. 688. I may refer also to Illingworth's Bampton Lectures, on *Personality Human and Divine*, which present the whole argument very clearly.

<sup>2</sup> Ἐν τοῖς περὶ Θεοῦ μεγάλη γνώσις, τὸ τὴν ἀγνοσίαν ὁμολογεῖν. *Cat.* vi. 2.

our own Hooker, 'Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High ; whom although to know be life, and joy to make mention of his name ; yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know him not as indeed he is, neither can know him : and our safest eloquence concerning him is our silence, when we confess without confession, that his glory is inexplicable, his greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above, and we upon earth ; therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few.'<sup>1</sup> This is a valuable caution, which may save us from perplexing ourselves about many problems that lie beyond the horizon of our thought, and enable us to wait with trustful patience for the fuller light of an enlarged spiritual existence. Especially may we remember the closing sentence when we are plunged into the teeming definitions and subtle inquisitiveness of ecclesiastical dogma. But we are not, because our knowledge is limited, to adopt the position of the agnostic. We know enough for religion and for life. His will concerning us is revealed in the conscience, his love towards us in the heart, when he has turned towards himself those organs of spiritual discernment, and opened the blind eyes of the soul. It is one of the mysteries why this light does not shine equally upon all, and why it varies so much in its clearness in those whom it has visited. But we cannot on this account deny what we have seen and known in the most sacred moments of our lives, and what is proved by the wide experience of holy men to be no delusion of our own, but a part of that light which lights mankind.

<sup>1</sup> *Ecclesiastical Polity*, I. ii. 2. I may quote also a passage from Bossuet : ' Comme il faut s'élever au-dessus de tout ce qui semble indigne de sa grandeur, à la fois il faut s'élever au-dessus de tout ce qu'on croit le plus digne, de sorte qu'on n'ose plus, en un certain sens, ni rien dire, ni rien penser de ce premier être, ni le nommer en soi-même, parce qu'on ne peut pas même expliquer combien il est ineffable, ni comprendre combien il est incompréhensible.' Quoted by Alfred Loisy, *Autour d'un petit livre*, 1903, p. 203.



We must pass on now to the unity of God. By this is meant that there is one, and only one, supreme and absolutely perfect being. This is the cardinal doctrine of the great monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, and is accepted by many who would not class themselves under any of these systems. The history of religion shows that monotheism does not rest on a necessary intuition of the religious nature. In feeling after its object it has found a prolonged satisfaction in inferior conceptions, and, observing the multiplicity rather than the unity of nature, has believed in many finite gods. But what satisfied the childhood of the spirit could not satisfy its manhood. To the great prophetic souls of the Hebrew race came the revelation that there was only one God, from whom proceeded the one universal law of right, to whom must be given an undivided worship. Thus the heart was gradually freed from its perturbations, and drawn towards the one central Spirit in whom alone it could find perfect satisfaction and peace. Among the Greeks a similar result was reached by the path of speculation. Philosophy could not rest in mere manifoldness, but sought for unity, some permanent and determining principle, behind the unceasing drift of phenomena. Heraclitus grasped the idea that all change was governed by an inviolable law of reason, and that therefore the universe itself was one, the constantly varying expression of eternal Thought. Thus both religion and reason are unable to pause in their upward flight till they reach the absolutely perfect, the supremely holy, and the supremely wise Cause of all, who is necessarily one. The tendency to polytheism is not indeed altogether outgrown ; for it offers to the lower feelings of religion nearer and more mundane deities, who seem capable of closer sympathy with the struggling human heart. But all the higher spirits have acquiesced in the doctrine of the unity of God, and have felt that the most intimate life that pervades their lives, the love that comes and rests upon their weariness, the grace that in privation is sufficient for them,

the mandate of righteousness that will not be denied, are the very presence within them of the one Lord of all.

We might pause here ; but it is an impressive confirmation of the result reached by this *a priori* method that our accumulating scientific knowledge accords with the vaticinations of religion and philosophy. The discovery of the transformation and conservation of energy shows that in the phenomena of nature we are confronted, not with various independent agents, but with various modes of one and the same activity. So far as we can carry our exploration the same laws everywhere prevail, and a universe of such inconceivable vastness that the imagination simply faints before it is bound into one by the most subtle ties. Gravitation is found far beyond the confines of the solar system. Heat darts across the millions of miles that separate us from the sun. Light visits us from distances which we can measure only by the years that it has taken to reach us, and stars too remote for any eye to see them through the most powerful telescope record themselves on the photographic plate. Spectrum analysis has revealed our own familiar chemistry in orbs divided from us by vast reaches of space, which can no longer be regarded as desert ; and it would almost seem as though the universe were such a mass of sensitive tissue that each event impressed itself upon the whole, and our daily walk sent a tremor through Orion and the Pleiades. All this accords with the belief in one universal sway.



## CHAPTER II

### DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

IN discussing the unity of God we might be content with what has been already written, and leave in the region of the incomprehensible the high metaphysical questions respecting the mode of God's eternal being, and of his relation to the world and to man. But it is alleged by the greater part of Christendom that within the essence of the one God there is a trinity of persons ; and as this doctrine is regarded, not as a lofty speculation about which men may differ, but as of radical importance in the formation of the Christian character, it is necessary for us to bring it under review. Although I can find no evidence which to my own mind is satisfactory that it was any part of primitive Christianity, I wish to treat with all seriousness a belief which has been tenaciously held by some of the master spirits of our race, and which has not only been maintained by those who were brought up to regard it as an essential condition of salvation, but been embraced by men of rare intelligence whose early prejudices were all against it.

When we come to the technical terms and definitions of the theologians, we are tempted to look upon the whole discussion as a piece of irreverence, prying with vain conceit into the mysteries of God ; but it is saved from this charge by the fact that the dogma is accepted as a part of Divine revelation, which therefore at once demands unhesitating belief and requires perfect accuracy of expression. It has been generally maintained that it lies completely beyond the

range of our natural faculties, and that therefore reverence consists in withholding criticism, and receiving it by an act of faith on the sole authority of the revealer. Some mystics indeed believe that for them the mystery has been dissolved in a rapturous intuition. Thus St. Teresa says, 'Our Lord made me comprehend in what way it is that one God can be in three Persons. He made me see it so clearly that I remained as extremely surprised as I was comforted, . . . and now, when I think of the Holy Trinity, or hear It spoken of, I understand how the three adorable Persons form only one God and I experience an unspeakable happiness.'<sup>1</sup> But those who have not this mystic consciousness have generally admitted that their reason is at fault. Thus the Formula of Concord exhorts 'all pious minds . . . to close the eyes of their reason, and bring their intellect into captivity to the obedience of Christ';<sup>2</sup> and Quenstedt says, 'The mystery of the Trinity is ὑπὲρ νοῦν, ὑπὲρ λόγον καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν κατάληψιν . . . Not even the possibility of this mystery can be had from the light of nature, since to reason consulting its own proper principles it seems absurd and impossible.'<sup>3</sup> Gregory of Nyssa had expressed the same opinion long before;<sup>4</sup> and the Catholic view is summed up by Thomas Aquinas in the conclusion that 'it is impossible to arrive through natural reason at the knowledge of the Divine persons of the Trinity.'<sup>5</sup> This is not in itself an irrational state of mind provided the Divine authority is adequately guaranteed; but it is obvious that when what purports to be a revealed dogma appears to our best reason to be 'absurd and impossible,' the revelation

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Professor James, *Gifford Lectures*, pp. 411 sq.

<sup>2</sup> *Solida Declaratio*, p. 787 sq.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Grimm, *Institutio theologiae dogmaticae evangelicae historico-critica*; ed. sec., 1869, p. 213, note 7.

<sup>4</sup> Μὴ μέντοι δύνασθαι λόγῳ διασαφεῖν τὴν ἀνέκφραστον ταύτην τοῦ μυστηρίου βαθύτητα. *Cat. Orat.* 3.

<sup>5</sup> 'Impossibile est per rationem naturalem ad Trinitatis divinarum personarum cognitionem pervenire.' *Summa theologica*, Pars I, Qu. xxxii, Art. i.



will require to be established by evidence of quite demonstrative force, and it may be that the incredibility of the contents will far outweigh any arguments that can be produced in its support. Where we are confessedly dealing with probable evidence it is simply treason against the truth to shut the eyes of our reason, and blindly swallow whatever is presented to us as a word of God. This, I suppose, would now be generally admitted by competent theologians; and as the old bases of infallibility have been undermined, there has been a tendency to bring the doctrine of the Trinity into the high court of reason, and insist that, even if we could not have discovered it for ourselves, it is the only view in which the reason can rest with satisfaction. We must now turn to the dogma itself, and speak of it in detail.

The starting-point of the doctrine is undoubtedly to be found in the primitive Christian experience as it is disclosed to us in the writings of the New Testament. God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Holy Spirit are constantly referred to, and it is clear that they enter into the inmost heart of Christian faith. It was felt that the secret meaning, the holiest idea, of Divine Sonship had been revealed in Christ. Consequently the reality of the Divine Fatherhood was apprehended with a new vividness of conviction; and this was accompanied by a sense of Divine power operating in the souls of believers, producing permanent and universal effects in sanctified lives, as well as some outward manifestations of a more sporadic and transitory character. It is clear that this experience would give rise to a variety of problems as soon as the mind began to reflect upon its significance, and upon the precise meaning and mutual relations of the terms through which it was originally expressed; and the final ecclesiastical answers to these problems constitute the dogma of the Trinity. It is admitted that that dogma is nowhere stated in the Bible, and that it is only by a process of reasoning that the several propositions of which it consists are inferred from a variety of passages,



and then pieced together into a coherent whole. As Hooker says, 'Our belief in the Trinity, the co-eternity of the Son of God with his Father, the proceeding of the Spirit from the Father and the Son . . . these with such other principal points, the necessity whereof is by none denied, are notwithstanding in Scripture nowhere to be found by express literal mention, only deduced they are out of Scripture by collection.'<sup>1</sup>

The most authoritative statement of the doctrine of the Trinity must be sought in the three Creeds, of which, however, the Athanasian alone presents us with the completed dogma. Of the last named the following are the essential portions:—<sup>2</sup> 'Fides autem catholica haec est, ut unum Deum in trinitate et trinitatem in unitate veneremur, neque confundentes personas, neque substantiam separantes. Alia est enim persona Patris, alia Filii, alia Spiritus sancti. Sed Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti est una divinitas, aequalis gloria, coaeterna majestas. Qualis Pater, talis Filius, talis Spiritus sanctus. (Uncreated, incomprehensible, eternal, almighty; yet not three eternals, etc., but one.) Deus Pater, Deus Filius, Deus Spiritus sanctus, et tamen non tres Dii, sed unus est Deus. (So each is Lord, and yet there is only one Lord.) Quia sicut singulatim unamquamque personam Deum et Dominum confiteri christiana veritate compellimur: ita tres Deos aut tres dominos dicere catholica religione prohibemur. Pater a nullo est factus, nec creatus, nec genitus. Filius a Patre solo est, non factus nec creatus, sed genitus. Spiritus sanctus a Patre et Filio, non factus, nec creatus, nec genitus, sed procedens. (So there is one Father, not three Fathers, etc.) Et in hac trinitate nihil prius aut posterius, nihil majus aut minus: sed totae tres personae coaeternae sibi sunt et coaequales, ita ut per omnia et trinitas in unitate et unitas in trinitate veneranda sit.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ec. Pol.* I. xiv. 2.

<sup>2</sup> I give the Latin, as a translation may be seen in the Book of Common Prayer.

<sup>3</sup> It is quoted in full in Hagenbach, *History of Doctrines*, 1880, I. p. 382 sq.



This is the form of the dogma commonly held in western Christendom ; but Arminian writers maintain that there is a kind of subordination among the three persons, the Father alone having the Divine nature from himself, and being the ' fons et principium ' of the divinity in the other two persons.<sup>1</sup> The Orthodox Greek Church, adhering to the original form of the Constantinopolitan Creed, declares that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone.

We must now look more closely into the meaning of the terms, in the use of which there was at first some uncertainty, leading to apparent inconsistencies of statement. ' Substantia ' in the Athanasian Creed answers to the Greek *οὐσία* which we may translate ' essence,' that which makes a thing what it is, and therefore in the present connexion, denoting that Divinity whereby God is distinguished from all other natures. The statement that we must not separate or divide the substance means that it is one numerically, and not one in kind ; and so it is not capable of distribution, as there is one humanity in Peter, James, and John. Consequently the whole of the Divine essence is in each of the persons.<sup>2</sup> The word ' persona ' has the same meaning as ' suppositum,' the Greek *ὑφιστάμενον, ὑπόστασις, πρόσωπον*, and generally bears the same sense as our word ' person.'<sup>3</sup> Thus Dr. Hodge,

<sup>1</sup> Quotations may be seen in Winer's *Comparative Darstellung des Lehrbegriffs*.

<sup>2</sup> So it is explained by Gerhard, quoted by Grimm, p. 212, note 1. See also Hooker V. lvi. 2, and, generally, the properly ' orthodox ' writers on the subject.

<sup>3</sup> The meaning of the Greek words is of course open to question. The idea of personality was not expressed with the same sharpness as in modern times. But the general treatment of the Greek fathers, so far as I have read them, seems to me to imply real personality ; for, as Dr. Moberly says, ' One " aspect " cannot contemplate, or be loved by another ' (*Atonement and Personality*, p. 86). Dr. Rashdall, in a review of Dr. Moberly's work, dissents, and asks, ' Can we suppose Love—the love of one person for another—to contemplate and be in love with the two persons who love one another ? ' (*Journal of Theological Studies* III. p. 184). ' Certainly we

defining, I think, the ordinary 'orthodox' view, says, 'A person is "suppositum intellectuale," a distinct individual existence, to which belongs [*sic*] the properties of reason and free will. Throughout the entire range of our experience and observation of personal existence among creatures, personality rests upon and appears to be inseparable from distinction of essence. Every distinct person is a distinct soul, with or without a body.

cannot; but it does not follow that the ancients were sensible of the difficulty. It is equally difficult for us to regard Thought or Reason, λόγος, as a person; and yet Augustine's *amans* and *amatus*, as well as the whole patristic treatment of the Logos, seem to involve real personality.

The Latin word *persona*, from meaning an actor's mask, came to denote the character or condition of a person, so that *tres personae* might indicate three characters sustained by the same person. This was the meaning given to the expression by Sabellius, who thought that the three characters were successive; and it has been suggested that the heresy of Sabellius consisted simply in his failure to recognize the eternity of these distinctions, and that the orthodox dogma expresses 'the thought of the three relations in which the one God always exists, the three distinct spheres of being—each representing special functions—which together make up the divine life' (*The Meaning of Homoousios in the 'Constantinopolitan' Creed*, by J. F. Bethune-Baker, in *Texts and Studies*, vii. p. 74). But if the persons really mean only τρόποι ὑπάρξεως, the words Father and Son seem to have been very indiscreetly chosen. Augustine appears to me clearly to dismiss this mode of interpretation. He hunts indeed for human analogies. Thus in the *Confessions* (xiii. 11) he says 'I am, and I know, and I will,' and in these three there is one inseparable life, one mind, and one essence. But he admits 'longe aliud sunt ista tria quam illa Trinitas.' In the *De Trinitate* (viii. 8-10) he remarks that he who sees love sees the Trinity; for love implies one who loves, one who is loved, and love. He finds another analogy in mind, love, and knowledge (ix. 3 sqq.) and also in memory, understanding, and will, which are not three lives, but one life (x. 11). And yet again, there is a trinity in wisdom, namely, wisdom, and the knowledge wisdom has of itself, and its love of itself (xv. 6). But he is perfectly aware of the inadequacy of these comparisons. The attributes alluded to belong to man as a single person; whereas the three persons of the Trinity do not belong to God, but are God, and are three persons, and not one—'Una persona, id est singulus quisque homo, habet illa tria in mente. . . . Una persona est, et imago est Trinitatis in mente. . . . Tres personae sunt unius essentiae, non sicut singulus



'That distinguishing mode of existence which constitutes the one divine essence co-ordinately three separate persons, is of course an infinite mystery which we cannot understand, and therefore cannot adequately define, and which we can know only so far as it is explicitly revealed. All that we know is, that this distinction, which is called personality, embraces all those incommunicable properties which eternally belong to Father, Son, or Holy Ghost separately, and not to

quisque homo una persona' (xv. 7; also in 23 he contrasts 'una persona' and 'tres personae'). When man is thus regarded as one person, and in this way distinguished from God, who is three, the word must surely be used in its modern sense. Otherwise Augustine might have presented a far nearer analogy, by pointing out that the same man might simultaneously be three *personae*, a general, a judge, and a philosopher. But with all his laboured exposition he seems to feel that his image completely fails at the essential point, and that the whole doctrine is beyond human understanding.

To revert to the Greek terms, it is true that the word ὑπόστασις does not necessarily mean *persona*. It was strictly used to denote the properties of persons as subsisting and being—τὰς ιδιότηας τῶν προσώπων ὑφειστώσας καὶ ὑπαρχούσας. (Quoted from Basil of Ancyra by Bethune-Baker, l. c., p. 80). But though ὑπόστασις is the technical word, πρόσωπον is also used as though the words were practically synonymous. It may be sufficient to quote one passage. Gregory Nazianzen says, τὰς τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις ὁμολογεῖν, εἴτ' οὖν τρία πρόσωπα, καὶ ἐκάστην μετὰ τῆς ιδιότητος (*Oratio de Dogmate et Constitutione Episcoporum*, 6). He had previously said, τὰς μὲν ιδιότηας χωρίζοντες, ἐνοῦντες δὲ τὴν θεότητα, (5). This suggests the *proprietaes* of Thomas Aquinas, to which Dr. Rashdall calls attention. But Thomas points out that a *relatio* is not necessarily a 'relatio personalis, id est constituens personam'; but the three 'relationes' constituting the Trinity are 'proprietaes personales, quasi personas constituentes' (*Summa Theo.*, Pars I, Quaest. xxx. Art. ii.), and he has previously accepted the definition of *persona* as 'rationalis naturae individua substantia' (ib. Art. i.), which certainly seems to describe a real person. And indeed he points out that though hypostasis among the Greeks does not properly include personality, nevertheless 'ex usu loquendi habet quod sumatur pro individuo rationalis naturae, ratione suae excellentiae' (ib. Art. ii).

The history of the theological term 'Substance' is dealt with in three articles by Dr. Strong, in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, Vols. II, III, and IV.

all in common ; that it lays the foundation for their concurrence in counsel, their mutual love and action one upon another, as the Father sending the Son, and the Father and Son sending the Spirit, and for use of the personal pronouns I, thou, he, in the revelation which one divine person gives of himself and of the others.’<sup>1</sup> It is clear from this that the term ‘ person ’ is used in the sense which we commonly attach to it, for only persons can concur in counsel and feel mutual love, and if the word were volatilized away into some unknown impersonal distinction, the doctrine would become unmeaning and would lose its religious interest. We shall return to the latter point when we consider the philosophic aspects of the question. But notwithstanding this distinct personality, which might seem to lead directly to tritheism, the unity of the Godhead is preserved by a peculiarity to which there is no analogy among created beings. Dr. Hodge says, ‘ Among all creatures every distinct person is a distinct numerical substance, and possesses a distinct intelligence, a distinct will, etc. In the Godhead, however, there is but one substance, and one intelligence, one will, etc., and yet three persons eternally coexist of that one essence, and exercise that one intelligence and one will, etc.’<sup>2</sup> The tritheistic error was condemned, and the absolute identity of each of the persons with the one ‘ individual essence ’ of God, was defined by the Fourth Lateran Council in A.D. 1215.<sup>3</sup> From all this follows what is technically known as the ‘ perichoresis ’ (properly ‘ revolution,’ a coming round to the same place again), according to which, by virtue of the unity of their essence, each Divine Person is immanent in each of the others. It follows further that the characteristic marks, or ‘ notes ’ (*notae*), of each person are properly confined to

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines of Theology*, by A. A. Hodge, D.D., Professor of Systematic Theology, Princeton, N.J., 1879, p. 165 sq.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 167.

<sup>3</sup> *Sacrosancta Concilia* . . . Studio Philip Labbei, and Gabr. Cossartii, . . . curante Nicolao Coleti. Venetiis, MDCCXXVIII. Tom. XIII. 927.



the internal and mutual relations of the three, and that all extraneous operations, although in ordinary speech attributed chiefly to one or the other, belong in reality to all in common.

Other modes of maintaining the Divine unity are found in theories of subordination, and of a modal Trinity. The latter kind of theory is frequently called, from its chief ancient representative, Sabellian. These systems, however, have been condemned as unorthodox, and none of them is now sufficiently prominent to merit particular attention.

We must now proceed to notice, though necessarily in a very summary way, the arguments which are appealed to in connexion with this dogma.

I. The Biblical Argument is founded on a variety of passages by which, severally, one or other of the various propositions contained in the dogma of the Trinity is supposed to be established, and these are then brought together so as to present one coherent view. We cannot here deal with the interpretation of particular passages, which would more properly come under review in a commentary, and we must now confine ourselves to general considerations, affecting groups of passages and the broad characteristics of the argument.

1. There are several passages where God, and Christ, and the Spirit are mentioned together, and it is said that where they are thus co-ordinated the Holy Spirit must be regarded as a person.<sup>1</sup> The value of this argument depends entirely on literary usage, for there is nothing except a feeling of literary fitness to forbid a man's speaking of the personal and the impersonal in juxtaposition. When Hooker says, in a letter to the Archbishop, 'God and nature did not intend me for contentions,' and Izaak Walton says of him 'God and nature blest him,'<sup>2</sup> it would be rash to infer

<sup>1</sup> See Matt. iii. 16 with its parallels, xxviii. 19 ; Rom. xv. 30 ; I Cor. xii. 4-6 ; II Cor. xiii. 14 ; Eph. ii. 21, 22 ; Titus iii. 4-6 ; I Pet. i. 2 ; Jude 20, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Life of Hooker, in Keble's edition, pp. 85 and 98.

that these writers believed in the separate personality of nature, although the former even goes so far as to ascribe intention to it. So, in the New Testament, Paul is reported as saying, in his address at Miletus, 'I commend you to God and to the word of his grace.'<sup>1</sup> In Ephesians<sup>2</sup> he speaks of 'one body, and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.' Are we to infer that faith and baptism are persons, and that because they come between the Lord and the Father they are included in the Godhead? In I John v. 8 we are told that 'there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood.' According to the rule the water and the blood must be persons, especially as they are not only co-ordinated with the Spirit, which is said to be personal, but, although neuters, are treated as masculine, οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, οἱ τρεῖς. The fact is, this kind of personification is of such perpetual occurrence, and so easily suggests itself, that we frequently fail to notice it. There are numerous instances in the Epistles of Paul; and we may judge from this how precarious is any argument founded on a passing ascription of personal attributes to the Holy Spirit. Among passages of this kind, however, there is reason for laying special stress on the one containing the baptismal formula, 'Baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'<sup>3</sup> The interpretation of these words must depend partly on the date which we assign to them. They have no parallel in the other Gospels, and there is no trace of the use of this formula in baptism anywhere else in the New Testament. These facts are hardly consistent with the supposition that Christ himself gave the commandment which is here recorded. I am therefore inclined to attribute the account to a Greek recension of Matthew of rather late date; and if this view be correct, it is not unlikely that the writer believed in the separate personality of the Spirit. But this is not proved, as is contended, by the use of the word 'name,' which it is said

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 32.<sup>2</sup> iv. 4-6.<sup>3</sup> Matthew xxviii. 19.



can be applied only to a person. The most that can be claimed is that the Greek term is applicable only to a proper name; and no one would deny that 'the Holy Spirit' was a proper, and not a generic name. The Greek word, *ὄνομα*, is constantly used of the names of towns and other places both in the LXX and in the New Testament. It is applied to Manna in Exodus xvi. 31; and in Psalm lxxi. 18, 19, we have this instructive instance of its use in relation to an impersonal attribute, immediately following a personal reference, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel . . . and blessed be the name of his glory.'<sup>1</sup> In Revelation iii. 12 we meet with this combination, 'I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem . . . and my new name,' so that we have a trinity consisting of God, the new Jerusalem, and Christ, each distinguished by the term 'name.' To give a more modern instance, in the Book of Common Prayer, in the service for the ordering of priests, the bishop says to those who are to receive the order, 'Ye shall answer plainly to these things, which we, in the Name of God, and of his Church, shall demand of you.' These examples are sufficient to show how precarious is an argument founded simply on our own idea of literary propriety.

2. In passages too numerous to refer to, God and Christ are mentioned together in a way which undoubtedly implies an intimate relation between them; and the only question is whether this relation implies in Christ coeternity and coequality with God, or even a nature essentially superhuman. Here again we must be guided by literary and religious usage. The more profoundly we apprehend the infinity of God, the more disinclined we are to name any other along with him; but men who approach these subjects simply from the religious side do not shrink from speaking in the same breath of God and of those who are his agents

<sup>1</sup> Εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὁ Θεὸς Ἰσραήλ, . . . καὶ εὐλογητὸν τὸ ὄνομα τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ. Psalm lxxii. in the English, which follows the Hebrew.

or his means of manifestation. I do not indeed know any precise parallel to the passages which we are considering; but then it is acknowledged on all hands that the relation of Christ to God was believed to be unique. There was only one Messiah; there was only one founder of Christianity; there was only one Lord whom all disciples acknowledged; there was only one first-born Son, solitary in the fulness and creative power of his sonship. It was inevitable, therefore, that language should be used respecting him which has no complete parallel. But we may find some analogies in expressions which would be startling if we thought only of the infinitude which separates God from all dependent beings. In Exodus xiv. 31 we read, 'They believed in the Lord and in Moses his servant.'<sup>1</sup> In Numbers xxi. 5 it is said, 'The people spake against God and against Moses,' which, from one point of view, is as incongruous as to say that they complained of the universe and of a speck of dust. Similarly, in the New Testament, we learn that Stephen was accused of speaking 'blasphemous words against Moses and God.'<sup>2</sup> Our translators seem to have been a little shocked at this, for in both the Authorized and the Revised Version the word 'against' is repeated before 'God,' so that the two names may not, as in the Greek, be governed by one preposition. In Joshua ix. 23 (al. 29) we have, according to the reading of the LXX, 'There shall not fail from among you a slave or a woodcutter for me and my God.'<sup>3</sup> In I Kings xxi. 10 and 13 Naboth is accused of cursing 'God and the king.' In I Chronicles xvi. 11 the commandment is given, 'Seek ye the Lord and his strength.' In the same book, xxix. 20, we are told that the people 'worshipped the Lord and the king.' In II Chronicles vi. 41 a material object is united with God—'Arise, O Lord

<sup>1</sup> Ἐπίστευσαν τῷ Θεῷ καὶ Μωυσῇ, in the LXX.

<sup>2</sup> Acts vi. 11.

<sup>3</sup> οὐ μὴ ἐκλίπη ἐξ ὑμῶν δοῦλος οὐδὲ ξυλοκόπος ἐμοὶ καὶ τῷ Θεῷ μου. The Hebrew has 'for the house of my God.'



God, into thy resting-place, thou, and the ark of thy strength.' In Hosea iii. 5 we read, 'Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall come with fear unto the Lord and to his goodness.' We may observe in the latter clause how the personal being and the impersonal attribute are coupled. According to Luke's report, Christ said 'When he shall come in the glory of himself and the Father and the holy angels';<sup>1</sup> and even if this ought to be corrected into the form in Matthew xvi. 27, it shows that this kind of combination was not felt to be unbecoming, and did not carry with it any doctrinal implication. The Apostles declare in their circular letter to the Churches that 'It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us,'<sup>2</sup> as though they were two co-ordinate authorities. In I Timothy v. 21 we read, 'I charge thee before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels.' In I Peter ii. 17 we find this combination, 'Love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the king.' Ignatius says, 'It becometh you . . . to cheer the soul of your bishop unto the honour of the Father [and to the honour] of Jesus Christ and of the Apostles.'<sup>3</sup> And again he says, 'It is good to know God and the bishop.'<sup>4</sup> In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs we read, 'The Lord is witness, and his angels are witnesses, and I am witness.'<sup>5</sup> In the Apostolical Constitutions the bishop is represented as the 'mediator' (*μεσίτης*) between God and the laity, as having 'regenerated' them 'unto the adoption of sons through water and spirit,' and as being an 'earthly god after God.'<sup>6</sup> Such language might seem grossly irreverent; but it cannot have been so intended, and what it really indicates is a firm belief in the closeness of God's communion with man, exercised through certain agents. More recent examples might be multiplied. A few must suffice. Robert Guiscard styled himself, 'by the grace

<sup>1</sup> ix. 26, ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τῶν ἁγίων ἀγγέλων.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xv. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Trall. xii.

<sup>4</sup> Smyrn. ix.

<sup>5</sup> Levi. xix.

<sup>6</sup> II. 26; and other passages might be cited.

of God and St. Peter, Duke of Apulia.'<sup>1</sup> Hooker says the true inscription of all churches within the realm should be 'By the goodness of almighty God and his servant Elizabeth we are.'<sup>2</sup> In one of his letters he says, 'God and his holy Angels shall at the last great day bear me that witness which my conscience now does.'<sup>3</sup> Walton says of him, 'He that praises Richard Hooker, praises God, who hath given such gifts to men.'<sup>4</sup> St. Anselm begins a letter by bestowing 'God's blessing and his own,'<sup>5</sup> and parted from the King of England with the words, 'I would fain before I go, if you refuse it not, give God's blessing and my own.'<sup>6</sup> At a later time he told a sister of Henry I 'that for the injury which for two years Henry had done to God and to himself, he was come to excommunicate him.'<sup>7</sup> Pope Sixtus V wrote, 'If anyone shall do otherwise than is comprehended in this our sanction, let him know that he will incur the indignation of almighty God and the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.'<sup>8</sup> These examples sufficiently prove that men do not, in their writings, use that guarded expression which we might expect in view of the infinitude of God; and therefore I cannot see that the passages in question involve more than the conviction that Jesus Christ was the medium through whom God was revealing his life in humanity, and establishing in the world a new order of his children. On the other hand, the fact that the two persons are so repeatedly mentioned without the third is not favourable to the doctrine of the Trinity.

3. We must now notice some general considerations

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, Chap. LVI.

<sup>2</sup> *Ec. Pol.* V. Dedication, § 10.

<sup>3</sup> Walton's *Life*, p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> *Life*, p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> *St. Anselm*, by Rev. R. W. Church, p. 115.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. 265.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 329.

<sup>8</sup> 'Si quis autem aliter fecerit quam hac nostra sanctione comprehensum est, noverit se in Dei Omnipotentis beatorumque Apostolorum Petri et Pauli indignationem incursum.' The Papal authorization of the Sixtine edition of the LXX: quoted by Dr. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, p. 180.



which seem adverse to the dogma of the Trinity, and, I think, fatal to the view that it is the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. It is quite true that we must expect a theology to be more scientific in form than the original outpourings of religious conviction, and that in the transition to the scientific stage technical terms must be introduced which were not required till thought began to scrutinize the contents of the new religious emotions ; and hence it is possible that the Bible may contain implicit truths which needed time in order to make themselves clear to the human intellect. To adopt this position, however, is to admit that Christianity is not a dogmatic religion, that it can bear its finest fruits apart from an exact doctrinal expression, and that the dogma, being wrought out by the natural human intellect, may be a misinterpretation of the primitive belief. Making the fullest allowance for these considerations, but at the same time remembering that all 'orthodox' theologians regard the doctrine as in its substance fundamentally and essentially Christian, we must look upon the following facts as very surprising, and, on the Protestant supposition that Scripture is the one only source of Divine truth, positively bewildering.

(a) This new and important doctrine had no name by which it could be referred to, and it remained without one, so far as we know, for at least one hundred and fifty years after the death of Christ. In Theophilus of Antioch we meet for the first time the word *τριάς* ; but the triad is God and his Logos and his Wisdom ; and immediately Man is added as a fourth, 'in order that there may be God, Logos, Wisdom, Man.'<sup>1</sup> Trinitas is found first in Tertullian,<sup>2</sup> who uses not only this term, but *οἰκονομία*, which he translates *dispensatio*.<sup>3</sup> Surely, one would expect that in

<sup>1</sup> ἵνα ᾖ θεός, λόγος, σοφία, ἄνθρωπος. *Ad Autol.* II. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *De Pud.* 21. ' Spiritus, in quo est trinitas unius divinitatis, pater et filius et spiritus sanctus.'

<sup>3</sup> *Ad Prax.* 2, 3.

controversy with the Jews a name would have been found for a doctrine which was the most prominent in Christian preaching, and to which the Jews have always been so strongly opposed, and that, if no others, at least Paul and John would have contrived some designation for it. When we find that the doctrine has no name by which it can be recognized, and that all the technical terms are absent, and have no equivalents, it is hard to believe that the doctrine was present in the minds of the first disciples.

(b) The doctrine is nowhere stated. There is not a single passage where it is affirmed that there are three persons in one God, or in one Divine substance, or where there is any proposition in the least resembling this; for I John v. 7 is confessedly a late interpolation. The only way in which an attempt can be made to prove the presence of the dogma is to resolve it into a series of propositions, and then seek to establish these one by one. Thus the Bible is like the dissected puzzles which amuse children by producing a required picture when the pieces are properly fitted together. It is strange that not even once, at least in some ascription of praise, does the great Christian secret escape from this conspiracy of silence.

(c) Passing to the several propositions, we find that those which are characteristic of the doctrine are nowhere laid down. They have to be inferred from scattered statements in which they are supposed to be implied. But, although we may fairly differ as to their precise meaning, these statements are all susceptible of a non-trinitarian interpretation, and such interpretation has been given by many competent scholars, sometimes by scholars who were themselves trinitarians. Numbers of them are of a kind that can make no impression on those who reject the infallibility of the Bible, who are unable to treat it as a collection of little divine sentences which may be read quite apart from their context, who therefore accord to it the respect which is due to genuine literature, and try to read it in a large and



historic spirit, with due regard to the circumstances, the beliefs, and the habits of the time when the several books were composed. To such passages no instructed and cautious interpreter would now venture to appeal. In proportion as we seek simply and humbly for the meaning of the writers, instead of thrusting upon them our own fancies or allegories, the proof-texts dwindle in number.

(*d*) The case becomes still worse when we encounter several passages which are at least apparently inconsistent with the doctrine, and which require subtle interpretation to get rid of their obvious testimony. The constant assertion of the unity of God, apart from any corrective or explanatory statement, is not indeed opposed to the dogma, but, if the dogma be true, it is misleading, and it did in fact mislead the Jews. But other passages are more explicit. In the prayer of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel the Father is expressly termed ‘the only true God’<sup>1</sup>; and Paul says ‘to us there is one God, the Father.’<sup>2</sup> Christ himself declares, ‘of that day or that hour knoweth no one . . . neither the Son, but the Father.’<sup>3</sup> The proof of the coequality of the second person with the first is generally connected with the person of Christ; and as this is a subject for further examination, I will now only call attention to the constancy with which God and Christ are distinguished when they are mentioned in juxtaposition; and to a plain man the phrase ‘God *and* Christ’ seems clearly to differentiate one from the other. These passages naturally suggest something very far removed from the doctrine of the Trinity; and it is not surprising that the Catholic Church claims the right of keeping the interpretation of Scripture in its own hands, for it is exceedingly doubtful whether anyone who was ignorant of the ecclesiastical dogma would ever evolve it for himself from the pages of the Bible.

(*e*) The last remark really understates the case; for a

<sup>1</sup> Τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεόν. xvii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατήρ. I Cor. viii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ. Mark xiii. 32.

considerable number of earnest and thoughtful men, though well acquainted with the ecclesiastical dogma, and though they have been for years habitual and reverent students of the Bible, have not only failed to find the dogma there, but have been quite satisfied that it is not there. This statement is true not only of those who were originally or who became avowedly antitrinitarian, but of some who have remained within the evangelical churches, and have not considered themselves debarred thereby from the application of sound principles of exegesis to the writings of the New Testament. This is highly curious if the doctrine of the Trinity is the chief corner-stone of Christianity.

From all these considerations combined it seems a reasonable conclusion either that the doctrine in question was quite unknown to the first generation of Christians, or, if known at all, was in a very inchoate and unsettled condition. It further follows that those who excommunicate their fellow-Christians for not accepting this doctrine are imposing conditions of fellowship which Christ did not impose, and are to that extent setting up their own religion in place of his, and making void his commandments by their traditions.

II. But if the scriptural argument be thus unstable, it may be that history makes amends, and that at least from the earliest post-apostolic times the Catholic Church is known to have held the doctrine without imperfection and without wavering. The broad facts are not at first sight favourable to this hypothesis. It is an undeniable historical fact that it took centuries of controversy, and required meetings of Council after Council, to bring the dogma into its complete and final form. This general fact, however, admits of different explanations; and that which is most obvious is not that which is commonly accepted, and is not necessarily the true one.

I. The following explanation attempts to justify the position that the dogma was part of the primitive deposit of faith, and was therefore always held by the Catholic Church.



So long as the dogma was not called in question, there was no reason why the Church should make a pronouncement through its chief authority. Scientific men are not always declaring that the earth goes round the sun, because every one believes that the fact is so ; but supposing some scientific quack arose, and asserted the contrary, and drew after him a considerable body of raw opinion which seemed to threaten a general relapse into error, the astronomers might think it well to meet together, and publish some authoritative declaration on the subject. So it was only when conceited or frivolous or impious or blundering heretics arose, and drew away people after them, that the Church found it necessary to interfere, and to declare authoritatively what was the true Christian doctrine on the matter in dispute. This is in itself a tenable hypothesis, and harmonizes the admitted development of dogma with the belief that the Catholic faith remained throughout one and unchangeable. Only it does not seem likely that the heretics were all dishonest, and trying to upset what they knew to be the truth ; and it is not easy to understand how they got astray if they had been carefully taught the Catholic belief, and still less how bishops, successors of the Apostles, were drawn into the snare, in such numbers too as sometimes to leave it doubtful which view would ultimately be pronounced orthodox. It looks as if in such cases a new or unsettled question had come to the front, and the Church was for the first time shaping its thought upon the subject, so that there was actually a development, not only of dogma, but of belief.

2. The last supposition furnishes an alternative explanation of the historical fact which we are considering. It may be that certain germs of thought actually unfolded themselves in the minds of Christians, as fresh problems continually arose ; that thus there was a slow progressive departure from the simplicity of the ancient faith ; and that to a certain extent the heretics, although themselves involved in the movement, and proposing new solutions for pressing

questions, nevertheless acted as a drag on the theological advance.

Such study as I have been able to make leaves on my own mind a very strong impression that the latter alternative is the true one. A full discussion of the question belongs to the history of dogma, and at present we must confine ourselves to a few salient points.

The following statements are quoted from a Catholic writer, and cannot be denied. 'The Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity, as a whole, is neither expanded nor reduced to system in the Apostolic Fathers.' 'Passing to the middle of the second century after Christ we find much fuller statements, and an approach to a definite theology on the three divine persons.' 'In two ways the teaching of many Ante-Nicene Fathers was imperfect and inconsistent with itself. First, their belief on the *principatus* [that is, the priority in nature of God the Father] and on the Theophanies, the mediatorial work of Christ, etc., led them to speak as if the nature of the Son were inferior to that of the Father.' 'Next, though in a sense the Ante-Nicene Fathers generally hold the eternity of the Logos, many of them affirm that his generation as Son happened in time.'<sup>1</sup> This is a candid statement, and it is difficult to reconcile with the belief that the doctrine of the Trinity was part of the primitive Christian teaching. Surely the most that can be said is that what was implicit in Christian faith was gradually and tentatively made explicit in thought.

If we turn to the three creeds, we observe a very curious advance in the number and complexity of the statements. The Apostles' Creed, in its complete form, is of rather late date; but it is founded on the ancient *Regula fidei*, and still retains the ancient simplicity. It is absolutely untrinitarian. It not only says nothing of three persons in one God, or of the deity and coequality of Christ and the Holy Ghost, but it classes together under one formula

<sup>1</sup> *A Catholic Dictionary*, by Addis and Arnold, pp. 817 sq.



of belief 'the Holy Ghost ; the holy Catholic Church ; the communion of saints ; the forgiveness of sins ; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.' The original form of the Nicene Creed makes important additions, but still falls far short of the dogma of the Trinity ; for, while asserting the deity and consubstantiality of the Son, it says nothing of his coeternity and coequality, and, to say the least, leaves the question of his subordination open.<sup>1</sup> Athanasius, however, subsequently to the Council, asserted the eternity of the Son so frequently that it is hardly necessary to refer to particular passages.<sup>2</sup> In the Creed the belief in the Holy Spirit remained undefined. The defect was repaired to some extent by the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381 ; but the language is still vague and imperfect.<sup>3</sup> The addition of *πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων* to *γεννηθέντα* may imply the eternity of the Son ; but the phrase is not quite without ambiguity. The Church is included, along with the three persons, under the original 'We believe.' A wide gap lies between these uncertain or defective statements and the precise definitions of the Athanasian Creed. Surely the reasonable inference from these phenomena is that the Church was slowly building up its theology, and reaching results which were quite unknown to the primitive disciples.

Lastly, we must notice a few particulars which are of special interest in connexion with this subject. Justin Martyr, though himself believing in the pre-existence of Christ,

<sup>1</sup> *Θεὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ, . . . δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο.*

<sup>2</sup> The following may be quoted : *ἔστι γὰρ αἰδῖος ὡς ὁ πατήρ, οὗ καὶ ἔστι λόγος αἰδῖος.* (Orat. I. *contra Arianos*, 18) ; and earlier in the same section the eternity, and virtually the equality, of the three persons are asserted : *αἰδῖος καὶ μία θεότης ἐστὶν ἐν τριάδι, καὶ μία δόξα τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος.* These great attributes were involved in the *ὁμοούσιος* : and *ὁμοούσιος ἡ τριάς.* (*Contra Apollinarium* I. 9.) The genuineness of the latter treatise is not generally admitted ; but this does not affect our statement.

<sup>3</sup> *Τὸ κύριον, τὸ ζωοποιόν, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον, τὸ σὺν πατρὶ καὶ υἱῷ συνπροσκυνούμενον καὶ συνδοξαζόμενον, τὸ λαλῆσαν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν.*

and in his subordinate and derived deity,<sup>1</sup> speaks without any bitterness, and without denying their Christianity, of some who believed that Jesus was 'a man sprung from men,' and Christ by 'election';<sup>2</sup> and he contemplates the possibility of Jesus being called 'Son of God' on account of his wisdom.<sup>3</sup> This is very different from the tone in which he speaks of the great Gnostic heresies, and leads to the supposition that, though the views which he represents were fast gaining the upper hand, they were still *sub judice*, and were not a source of division in the Church. In fact Justin expressly insists that the truth of Christianity is not dependent on the doctrine of Christ's person which he wishes to establish. If his argument fails, it will only show that he has been in error, and will not affect the truth that Jesus is the Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Passing on to Tertullian, we meet a very remarkable statement. In his treatise against Praxeas<sup>5</sup> he complains that 'the simple, not to say unwise and unlearned, who are always the major part of believers' did not understand that the one only God is to be believed in with his 'economy,' and have a horror of the economy, supposing that the number of the trinity is a division of unity, and declaring that two and three Gods 'are preached by us,' while they themselves are worshippers of one God. The Latins themselves took up the Greek word *monarchia*; but even Greeks were unwilling to understand *οἰκονομία*. There could hardly be a plainer statement that the doctrine of the Trinity was still regarded with dislike by the bulk of ordinary Christians, on whom it was being slowly forced by the speculative theologians.

Origen also deals gently with many 'claiming to be lovers of God,' who were disturbed by the fear of proclaiming two

<sup>1</sup> Θεὸς καὶ κύριος ἕτερος ὑπὸ τὸν ποιητὴν τῶν ὅλων [the ὑπέρ of the MSS. is an obvious error]. Again Θεὸς ἕτερός ἐστι τοῦ τὰ πάντα ποιήσαντος θεοῦ, ἀριθμῶ λέγω ἀλλ' οὐ γνώμη. *Dial.* 56.

<sup>2</sup> Ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἀνθρώπων: ἐκλογῇ. *Dial.* 48.

<sup>3</sup> Διὰ σοφίαν. *Apol.* I. 22.

<sup>4</sup> *Dial.* 48.

<sup>5</sup> § 3.



Gods, and consequently ‘fell into false and impious dogmas,’ either denying a property<sup>1</sup> in the Son different from that of the Father, or denying his deity while admitting that he had a different property and essence.<sup>2</sup> And how does he resolve their difficulties? By drawing a distinction between God with the article and God without the article.<sup>3</sup> The former is God by his own intrinsic nature,<sup>4</sup> but all else that bears the name is ‘deified by participation in his deity,’<sup>5</sup> just as there is only one Logos, and yet there is by participation a Logos in each rational being, and the latter bears to the original Logos the same relation that the God-Logos bears to God. In this sense Origen calls the Son of God a second God.<sup>6</sup> However, ‘the multitude of those who are supposed to have believed’ know Christ only according to the flesh.<sup>7</sup> It would seem from this that the general mind of Christendom was still opposed to the subtleties of the theologians. We must add to these indications the express testimony of Origen that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was not yet clearly determined, but must be inquired into from sacred Scripture, and investigated with discriminating research.<sup>8</sup>

The last statement is incidentally confirmed by Hippolytus. In summing up ‘the true doctrine of the Divine Being,’<sup>9</sup> he expounds at length his belief about God and the Logos,

<sup>1</sup> Ἰδιότητα.      <sup>2</sup> Οὐσία.      <sup>3</sup> Ὁ θεός and θεός.      <sup>4</sup> Αὐτόθεος.

<sup>5</sup> Μετοχῇ τῆς ἐκείνου θεότητος θεοποιούμενον.

<sup>6</sup> Δεύτερος θεός. *Cont. Cels.* V. 39, p. 241 Lom.

<sup>7</sup> *Com. in Joan.*, Tom. II. 2, 3, pp. 92 sqq. in Lom.

<sup>8</sup> *De Princip.* I. Preface, 4. According to Rufinus’ translation the tradition was that the Spirit was allied in honour and dignity with the Father and the Son, but it was not discerned whether he was born or unborn, or even a Son of God. According to Jerome’s account he said the Spirit was third in dignity and honour after the Father and the Son, but was ignorant whether he was made or not made. There may have been different readings, γεννητός and γενητός.

<sup>9</sup> Ὁ περὶ τὸ θεῖον ἀληθὲς λόγος.

but says not a word about the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> The third person seems indeed by clear implication to be excluded from the Godhead, for it is said that the Logos alone is from the substance of God.<sup>2</sup> This is said, indeed, in contrast not with the Spirit, but with the universe; but it would surely have been expressed differently by one who believed that the Spirit proceeded from the essence of God. It is consistent with this view that Hippolytus was charged by Callistus with being a 'ditheist,' not a tritheist.<sup>3</sup> Another passage in Hippolytus has been appealed to as showing that he thought there were only two persons in the Godhead: 'I see one God, but two persons.'<sup>4</sup> The context does not bear out the inference. The immediate words refer to the suggestion that the saying in the Gospel, 'The Logos was with God, and was God,' proves that there are two Gods. The answer is that there were not two Gods, but two persons, and is obviously intended, not as a statement of the complete dogma, but as an interpretation of the passage in question. The chapter, as a whole, asserts the doctrine of the triad, and we may observe that the passage in the last chapter of Matthew is quoted with the baptismal formula.

It seems exceedingly improbable, in view of the foregoing facts, that the doctrine of the Trinity was any part of primitive Christianity. If it were so, how would it have been possible that not only numbers of imperfectly educated Christians were strongly opposed to it, but the most learned theologians of the Church were not only so defective, but so widely astray in their definitions? And how are we to explain the fact that the opposition to Unitarian views becomes so much more pronounced and bitter as time goes on? It seems evident that the dogma was really of very slow growth,

<sup>1</sup> *Ref.* X. 32 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Τούτου ὁ λόγος μόνος ἐξ αὐτοῦ διὸ καὶ θεός, οὐσία ὑπάρχων θεοῦ.

<sup>3</sup> *Ref.* IX. 11, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Ἐνα θεὸν ὁρῶ, πρόσωπα δὲ δύο, οἰκονομία δὲ τρίτην τὴν χάριν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. *Cont. Noet.*, 14.



and was the result of an attempt on the part of several generations of theologians and philosophers to bring into conscious thought and fix in precise forms truths which were originally undefined spiritual convictions, arising out of a profound experience of the inner life of Christianity. This, however, is by no means equivalent to saying that the dogma is not true, or even that it does not rest ultimately on a real basis of revelation. Such an inference would be warranted only by the Protestant hypothesis that Christianity is given complete and once for all on the infallible pages of the Bible. But if we look upon Christianity as essentially a spirit of life, even the life of God which is to unfold itself in ever-growing perfection in the life of humanity, we can easily believe that spiritual experiences themselves become fuller and clearer as time goes on, and that their implicit contents crystallize into plainer and truer forms as thought becomes enlarged and purified. From this point of view the history of the doctrine of the Trinity becomes a record of one of the sublimest efforts of the human mind to turn faith into knowledge, and to give definite intellectual guidance to the vague anticipations of religion. But unless we can combine with this the belief that the process of formulation was exempt from the ordinary laws of intellectual inquiry, and was preserved from error by a miraculous influence, two results follow. However fully we may admit a real basis of spiritual experience, or of revelation, still the form of the doctrine is the result of intellectual interpretation, and therefore liable to all the error that besets human thinking. There can be no doubt that the course of thought and the terminology were affected by the philosophy and knowledge of the time, and therefore the result is open to revision or even to rejection, under the influence of wider thought and larger knowledge. Further, it becomes unwarrantable to impose this dogma as a test of Christianity. To do so is to confound the intellectual form with the spiritual substance, and to apply a test which would exclude the mass of the



early believers, including the Apostles and Christ himself, from the Christian commonwealth.

III. We pass on now to an argument, founded partly on religion, partly on philosophy, which has been much esteemed in recent times, and deserves our respectful consideration. The religious principle which lies at the basis of this argument may be thus expressed:—the Christian spirit finds satisfaction only in One whose eternal essence is love, and who therefore loves us, and holds real communion with us, as a Father with his children. In the words of Paul, ‘God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father’; and in those of John, ‘God is love’; ‘By this we know that we abide in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.’ I suppose it will be admitted that these words describe a primary Christian experience and conviction—real love, real communion, the real inworking of the Divine Spirit in the heart. In these and other simple utterances, which came from the glowing faith of primitive times, we meet with the terms Father, Son, and Spirit, associated in one divine experience of the soul; and we have no other terms which would so fitly express the underlying ideas. The question is, do these expressions of spiritual communion imply the dogma of the Trinity?

1. In the first place, it is said that those who deny the dogma represent God as an abstract and solitary unit, who is remote from all living personal relations, and that therefore they are quite ignorant of his Fatherhood, and offer to the longing heart nothing but a chilly deism. It would be fair to argue that if they were consistent the case ought to be so; but in fact it is far otherwise. They have specially insisted on the Fatherhood of God, and are sometimes reproached with making that Fatherhood far too universal in its scope. They may be deficient in metaphysical grasp; but in fact they are able to rest in the fatherly love of God, and to believe in his manifold activity and manifestation, without



troubling themselves or others with this remote and abstract unity. The objection is derived, not from the actual teaching of Unitarians, but from a fundamental dictum of Trinitarian theologians. It is an Origen who says that God is 'a simple intellectual nature . . . altogether a monad and unit.'<sup>1</sup> It is a Hooker who says, 'Our God is one, or rather very Oneness, a mere unity.'<sup>2</sup> This is of course the Catholic doctrine. Thomas Aquinas lays down the proposition 'that God is absolutely simple,'<sup>3</sup> and this doctrine was defined by the Fourth Lateran Council, A.D. 1215, 'There are indeed three persons, but one essence, substance, or nature absolutely simple'; and the notion of a collective unity, like 'many men, one people,' was expressly rejected.<sup>4</sup> At an earlier time Pope Dionysius (in the third century), speaks of God as 'the holy monad'<sup>5</sup>; and Athanasius describes God as 'something simple.'<sup>6</sup> One way of evading the hurtful consequences of this position is the doctrine that in the 'essential Unity of God a Trinity personal nevertheless subsisteth, after a manner far exceeding the possibility of man's conceit.'<sup>7</sup> But it is possible to be satisfied without pressing our speculations into these high regions, and attempting to explain the unknown by the more unknown. We can be humbly content with the incomprehensibility of God, and believe that in some way 'exceeding the possibility of man's conceit' there is in God the manifoldness which seems inherent in the unity of all personality.

<sup>1</sup> Μονάς and ένας. *De Princip.* I. i. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ec. Pol.* I. ii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 'Deum esse omnino simplicem.' *Summa The.*, Quaest. iii. Art. vii.

<sup>4</sup> 'Natura simplex omnino.' Labbe, *Concilia*, Tom. XIII. pp. 927, 929.

<sup>5</sup> Τὴν ἁγίαν μονάδα. Quoted by Athanasius, *Epist. de decretis Nicaenae Synodi*, 26.

<sup>6</sup> Ἀπλοῦν τι. *Ibid.* 22. This abstract unity supplied a reason for declining to make images of God: οὐ γὰρ τὸ θεῖον ἀπλοῦν ὑπάρχον καὶ ἄληπτον μορφαῖς τισι καὶ σχήμασιν ἀπεικάζομεν. Quoted in the Proceedings of the Second Council of Nicæa. Labbe, *Concilia* VIII. p. 1025. I owe the reference, though not the full quotation, to Gibbon.

<sup>7</sup> Hooker, *Ibid.*

2. A more serious argument is founded on the nature of love. If love be the essence of God, then he must always have had an object of love. This, it is said, is provided for in the doctrine of the Trinity; and apart from that doctrine we have nothing left but the dreary notion of an empty unity, subsisting, prior to creation, in eternal solitude, with no object for activity or affection. This argument is, in substance, at least as old as Origen. He says, 'God did not begin to be a Father, prevented, like men who become fathers, by not being able yet to be a Father.'<sup>1</sup> For if God is always perfect, and has the power of being a Father, and it is a good thing for him to be the Father of such a Son, why does he put off, and deprive himself of the good thing, and, so to say, that from which he can be Father of a Son? The same thing is to be said also about the Holy Spirit.'<sup>2</sup> Similarly Cyril of Jerusalem insists on the eternity of the Divine Fatherhood; for we cannot suppose that God was first childless, and afterwards, changing his purpose, became a Father.'<sup>3</sup> Athanasius too relies upon this argument. Speaking of the Arians he says, 'Let them tell what it is that prevents God from being always Father of the Son.'<sup>4</sup> Augustine suggests the argument from love:—'You see the Trinity if you see love'; and again, 'For there are three, loving, loved, and mutual love.'<sup>5</sup> This argument was elaborated by Richard of the Abbey of St. Victor (in Paris: died about the year 1173). Love in God must be perfect, like all his attributes. This highest love must have an object which is worthy of itself; and, as this cannot be

<sup>1</sup> The reading is *πατέρες*, owing perhaps to a confused construction; the sense requires *πατήρ*.

<sup>2</sup> The first fragment from the *Com. in Gen.*, preserved by Eusebius, *Cont. Marcel.* I. 4, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Cat.* vii. 5; xi. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Εἰπάτωσαν τοίνυν τί τὸ ἐμποδίζει τὸν θεόν, ἀεὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ πατέρα αὐτὸν εἶναι.* *Orat. I. Cont. Arianos*, 27.

<sup>5</sup> 'Vides trinitatem, si caritatem vides,' and 'nam tres sunt, amans, amatus, et mutuus amor.' *De Trin.* viii. 8, ix. 2.



creation, it must be a Divine and coequal person. Since God's love is eternal, this person also must be eternal. Further, the highest love, being free from all egotism, wishes its object to love another besides itself. Thus it is only in the society formed by the three persons of the Trinity that love can have its perfect exercise.<sup>1</sup> In the seventeenth century (1637) the poet Suckling made use of this argument : God is declared 'to be one, and but one ; it being gross to imagine two omnipotents, for then neither would be so. Yet since this good is perfectly good, and perfect goodness cannot be without perfect love ; nor perfect love without communication, nor to an unequal or created—for then it must be inordinate ; we include a second coeternal though begotten ; nor are these contrary, though they seem to be so.'<sup>2</sup>

So far as relates to the second person this argument is pressed with great earnestness in the very able and interesting Essay on 'The Incarnation and Principles of Evidence,' by Richard H. Hutton, first published in 1862 in 'Tracts for Priests and People.' Two or three short extracts must suffice :—'If Christ is the Eternal Son of God, God is indeed and in essence a Father ; the social nature, the spring of love is of the very essence of Eternal Being.'<sup>3</sup> 'If . . . we pray to One who has revealed His own eternity through the Eternal Son . . . then we keep a God essentially *social* before our hearts and minds, and fill our imagination with no solitary grandeur.'<sup>4</sup> 'The discovery which Christ made to us . . . was, as it seems to me, in one aspect of it—that aspect in which it could be made only through an Eternal Son of God—this : "never try to think of Me," it seems to say, "as a mere Sovereign Will ; never try to conceive my Infinitude as exclusive of all Divine Life, except my own :

<sup>1</sup> See the summary in Grimm, p. 238, note 1, and in Herzog.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from his treatise, 'An Account of Religion by Reason,' in Tulloch's *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century*, Vol. I. pp. 112 sq.

<sup>3</sup> p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> p. 22.

my infinitude is not exclusive, but spiritual, and includes the fulness of all spiritual life, eternal love. Think of Me as always communicating life, and love, and power—as always receiving love and obedience. Never pronounce the word ‘God’ without recognizing that diversity of reciprocal life which *is* the highest life—the reconciliation of law and fidelity, of inspiration and submission, of life overflowing and returning, which cannot be without a perfect union of distinct personalities.”<sup>1</sup>

Bishop Gore extends the argument to reason and will. ‘The life of spirit,’ he says, ‘the highest life we know, is made up of the action of will and reason and love. In God, then, we imagine, is a perfect and eternal life, of will and reason and love. But must not this be a life of relationships? Most surely love is only conceivable as a personal relationship of a lover and a loved. If God is eternal love, there must be an eternal object of His love. Again, the life of reason is a relationship of the subject which thinks to the object thought, and an eternally perfect mind postulates an eternal object for its contemplation. Once more, the life of will means the passage of will into effect: there is no satisfaction of will except in production; an eternally living and satisfied will postulates an eternally adequate product. Thus it is that our upward-soaring trains of thought lead us to postulate over against God in His eternal being, also an eternal expression of that being, which shall be both an object to his thought and a satisfaction to His will and a repose to His love.’<sup>2</sup> This doctrine, he says, ‘can explain how God can be eternally alive and yet in complete independence of the world which he created, because God’s unique eternal being is no solitary and monotonous existence; it includes in itself the fulness of fellowship, the society of Father and Son and Spirit.’<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *The Incarnation of the Son of God*: the Bampton Lectures for 1891, pp. 134 sq.

<sup>3</sup> p. 137.



I will quote one other writer. The late Principal T. C. Edwards says, 'God from eternity must have lived a life of companionship,' and this on the ground that 'God is love.'<sup>1</sup> 'The actual command of the Father to the Son was matter of loving and free council in the Trinity.'<sup>2</sup> 'The root idea of the Trinity is that God is love.'<sup>3</sup>

I gladly recognize the earnest and religious character of these arguments, and the candid and sober conviction with which they are put forward. In our estimate of them much depends on the place which we assign to the doctrine of the Trinity in relation to revealed religion. If we believe that the doctrine has been revealed, and comes to us with the impress of Divine authority, then we must gratefully welcome considerations which, though not amounting to proofs, make it more acceptable at once to the intellect and the heart. But if we do not believe that it is revealed, if we regard it as the result of the slow elaboration of human thought, though resting on a spiritual basis, we shall be less impressed by the arguments, and more affected by the criticism which may be passed upon them. Now, we have already seen reasons for adopting the latter view of the dogma, and therefore these high speculations appeal to us with less force than they naturally possess for those who put them forward. I must criticize them, not as apologetic adjuncts of a doctrine otherwise known, and incapable of discovery by natural reason, but only as the tentative ideas of a religious philosophy. From this point of view I make the following suggestions.

The idea of a Divine 'society' is pure polytheism. An eternal being who is objective to God, who is necessary to sustain his self-consciousness and to comfort his solitude,

<sup>1</sup> *The God-Man*, being the 'Davies Lecture' for 1895, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> p. 35. In accordance with this view Mr. Illingworth allows himself to use the repellent polytheistic phrase, 'a social God' (*Personality Human and Divine*, p. 75).

who receives love and renders obedience, is a second God, as Origen frankly calls the second person ; and if, to escape this result, you say that the two are one and the same indivisible essence, then the objectivity disappears, the 'society' is dissolved, and the consciousness becomes simply self-consciousness, and the love self-love.

The whole discussion seems to me to rest on an anthropopathic conception of God, and to assume that what is necessary for the highest life of a finite mind must also be necessary for the infinite Spirit. It is indeed only through the finite that we can approach the infinite, only through the love revealed in human consciousness that we can apprehend the Divine love ; but we cannot infer from this that God's being is bound by the same laws as ours, and that we can justly argue from that which *becomes* to that which eternally *is*. We frame an idea of eternity consisting of a succession of times without beginning, and then we think how lonely God would have been through the infinitude of desolate ages unless he had had within himself the 'society' and 'companionship' of three persons. There may be here a misunderstanding of eternity, and of God's relation to time ; and in transferring to him the necessities of our human affection, in order to save him from the dreariness of unnumbered solitary years, we are drawing him into too close a resemblance to our dependent and limited nature. The ascription of 'social' life to God, far from bringing satisfaction to either my intellect or my heart, seems to me though it is certainly not so intended, to border closely on the irreverent.

Again, a similar argument will apply to the creativeness of God. This too belongs to the essence of his being, and must have been eternally exercised. Origen actually uses this argument, and infers that 'the universe is without beginning, and coeternal with God.'<sup>1</sup> The extracts in

<sup>1</sup> Ἀναρχὸν καὶ συναΐδιον τῷ Θεῷ τὸ πᾶν. Quoted by Photius, Cod. 235, from Methodius. See also the argument on the omnipotence of God in *De Princip.* I. ii. 10.



Photius, who records this opinion, on the authority of Methodius, contain a long reply to the argument, of which the most striking part is the statement that, inasmuch as God is different from the cosmos, and the cosmos different from God,<sup>1</sup> he would not be self-sufficing and perfect<sup>2</sup> if he were dependent on the cosmos for any of his perfections. This counter-argument, though it does not clear up any fallacy in Origen's reasoning, suggests at first sight an important difference between the creation, as an eternal object of thought and love, and an eternal person within the Divine essence itself; for the supposition of the latter still leaves the Deity self-sufficing. Nevertheless I think the argument is misleading. For in regarding God as eternally creative you do not represent the cosmos as constituting with him a duality of eternal principles, so that he is as much dependent on the cosmos as the cosmos on him. You only say that creativeness belongs essentially to his eternal perfection, and therefore there never was a time when he was not creative. An artist does not depend for his perfection on the thing which he has produced, but manifests his artistic perfection in producing it. And again, the argument, such as it is, is really just as applicable to the conception of an eternal Son; for though this doctrine leaves the Divine essence self-sufficing, yet in representing the Son as different personally from the Father it denies that the Father is self-sufficing. Indeed the whole argument virtually rests on an alleged imperfection in the first person of the Trinity, when regarded by himself alone. Yet explicitly to maintain such imperfection would be heresy.<sup>3</sup> The same considerations will apply to Athanasius' answer to the argument of the

<sup>1</sup> Ἐτερον θεὸς κόσμον, καὶ ἕτερον κόσμος θεοῦ.

<sup>2</sup> Ἀπροσδεής and τέλειος.

<sup>3</sup> Roses tries to remove the difficulty by saying that Origen confuses the relative with the absolute and eternal energy of God: *Σύστημα*, p. 341. If this refutes the argument about the universe, it is equally fatal to that connected with the Trinity; for fatherhood is as relative as creativeness.

Arians that by parity of reasoning the creation must be eternal. Having first stated that the Arians are fools, he then insists on the distinction between a son and a thing made,<sup>1</sup> the former being a proper offspring of the substance, whereas the latter is from outside the maker and from things non-existent,<sup>2</sup> and is therefore produced when the Creator wills ; but that which is a property of the essence is not subject to will.<sup>3</sup> The distinction is no doubt clear and correct ; but it does not meet the difficulty. The question is, if creativeness belongs to the Divine essence, what prevented God from exercising it till a few thousand years ago ? And to this Athanasius replies that such an audacious question belongs to madmen. He then argues, however, that things that have become<sup>4</sup> are *ipso facto* not eternal. But eternal productiveness of the Divine volition is really quite as intelligible as the eternal generation of the Divine substance ; and although it is impossible for us to understand how a series coming from an eternal past has ever reached the present moment, it is equally impossible for us to think of a beginning, however remote, beyond which we are unable to imagine something prior ; and for my part, I find it hard to believe that God, having subsisted from eternity in the isolation of his own being, suddenly began, a few thousand years ago, to create a dependent universe. I say, a few thousand years ago, in accordance with the old supposition ; but extend the time to as many millions as you please, and the argument remains unaffected. The question is, do we reach at last a time when space was empty, and time was a motionless eternity in which God created nothing ? If so, why did the Unchangeable change ? Why did the Omnipotent begin to put forth power, as though he

<sup>1</sup> Υἱός and ποίημα.

<sup>2</sup> Ἰδιον τῆς οὐσίας γέννημα, and ἔξωθεν τοῦ ποιούντος, ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων.

<sup>3</sup> Orat. I. *Contra Arianos*, 29. This disposes of Bishop Gore's argument about the exercise of will.

<sup>4</sup> Γενητά.



had become newly conscious of a latent energy? This argument certainly seems to me as cogent as that which is put forward on behalf of an eternal sonship. But if so, then God had in creation an eternal object for his will, reason, and love, and the alleged necessity for a distinction of persons within his own being disappears. This is of course a speculation; but as a speculation, it is far more satisfying to my own mind and heart than the representation of a Divine companionship filling an otherwise empty eternity with nothing but mutual love, in which, as between persons absolutely equal and of identical essence, there could be no giving and receiving, no mutual activity, but the same motionless sentiment, like a frozen sea sleeping under the chill of an eternal night.

Once more, this love among equals, who are separated by an infinite gulf from all others, can be no evidence of God's love towards finite beings. The paternal satisfaction in a coequal Son can be no guarantee of the Divine Fatherhood in relation to us. If we are children of God at all, we must be so in a sense so absolutely different that the two relationships ought not to be designated by the same name, and to say that one is the Son by nature, and others are sons by adoption, fails utterly to describe the vastness of the interval between them. In short, the mysterious relations of the Infinite within himself can offer no security for his relations towards finite and created beings; and, conversely, the latter can be no evidence of the former. Indeed, if love found its entire satisfaction within the eternal realm, it is all the more difficult to understand why it should ever step forth among the things of time, and seek for the responsive love of dependent spirits.

The argument, however, is pressed still further, and it is maintained that the existence of a second person is involved in the very idea of eternal personality. This view is ably and clearly presented by Dr. T. Vincent Tymms in his Essay on 'Christian Theism,' in 'The Ancient Faith in Modern

Light,' published in 1897. He starts from Herbert Spencer's dictum that in all consciousness of self a not-self, or an other-than-self, is given; and he then criticizes Dr. Martineau's attempts to provide the Divine consciousness with this other-than-self in an eternal matter, or in an eternity of created and finite minds. He quotes the admission that 'if there be a condition requisite for the Divine Cause, it must from the nature of the case be already there, i.e., be self-existent with Him,' and then, I think, justly argues that by parity of reasoning, if manlike persons 'are the necessary conditions of God's Personality, they must be "self-existent with Him."' It follows that if 'God actually created all finite persons, it must be conceded that some uncreated "other-than-self" existed with God, or within God's personal fulness of being, as the indispensable condition of His own causality.' Therefore 'we must discover some adequate Objective or Divine Self-expression, which so enriches our conception of the Divine Personality, that we can think of God as containing in Himself all the conditions of self-conscious and spontaneous volitional energy of life.' But he does not 'mean another self in the sense of a second personal God, but something which corresponds to another self in the case of finite creatures. An eternal and self-existent person must contain in Himself what we can only find in other finite beings outside ourselves, or He cannot exist.'<sup>1</sup>

It may be from some inherent defect of metaphysical power, but I confess I am quite unable to assimilate the thoughts which are here presented. A personal being who is objective to God, other-than-self, must be, according to our poor thinking, a distinct person from God, and, if he be at the same time God, he must be a second God. If, in order to save the Divine unity, you deny this, and make the other-than-self really a part of the self, it becomes simply the unknown condition of an eternal self-consciousness. The

<sup>1</sup> pp. 26 sqq.



argument begins with the assumption that what is needful for self-consciousness in the finite mind is also needful in the infinite, and ends by declaring that the infinite Mind is self-conscious through a condition which is absolutely different from that through which we are self-conscious. Thus it appears to me to be really self-destructive. As a criticism of Dr. Martineau it may have some force ; but I am unable to soar into that rare atmosphere of speculation, and to assert that what seems necessary to stir the sense of personality in me must have been the eternal condition of personality in the infinite Being. We surely are not compelled to be either agnostics or pantheists because we think that the method of eternal self-consciousness is inscrutable, and are content to say that God has all perfection within himself, without trying to bring all the elements of that perfection within the limits of our puny reason.<sup>1</sup>

I have stated the objections which occur to me if we assume the legitimacy of this kind of speculation. But, as I have intimated, such questions appear to me to lie far beyond the compass of our thought. The spirit may search out the deep things of God, and send flashes of holy light into the temple of our heart. But the deep things are those which concern his relations to us, and his purposes of love towards us. Into these things we can see at least as in a mirror, darkly, waiting for the time when we shall see face to face.

<sup>1</sup> A brief review of other writers who follow a similar line of argument may be seen in 'The Trinity and the Incarnation,' by R. A. Armstrong, 1904. See also an important letter of Dr. Martineau's in Professor Knight's *Inter Amicos*, pp. 26 sqq. I may quote two sentences from Father Dalgairns : 'Because we arrive at the knowledge of our own personality through contact with that of others, it does not follow that personality itself is constituted by the sharp shock which comes through knocking our own self against another self.' Again, 'Who can prove that there is not one that requires no object but his own self, and in that self comprehends all things, since the universe was conceived eternally in His mind ?' From an article on *The Personality of God* in the 'Contemporary Review,' XXIV. pp. 336 and 337.

In the early days of human thought this world was half the universe, and appeared to be no unfitting stage for the divine drama of existence. To the Christian theologian the thought of God centred there, and the fortunes of mankind were settled in the council of the Trinity. But now it has become as a speck of sand upon a boundless shore ; and when we look forth at night among the countless hosts of stars, we can only bow in speechless awe before the mysterious majesty of Him who called them into being, and guides their stupendous march through the illimitable ages. The secrets of his eternal and infinite life, the method of his thought, the outflowing of his affection, we cannot penetrate. He is incomprehensible, and known only to himself. The warmth of his love towards us we can feel ; rays of supernal light from his transcendent reason we can see ; the mandates of his righteous will we can revere. We have enough for faith and life ; but beyond lies the infinite expanse, where our highest wisdom is to acknowledge our ignorance. ‘ Such knowledge is too wonderful for us ; it is high, we cannot attain unto it,’ and

‘ Here the highest seraphs could no more  
Than veil their faces, tremble, and adore.’

Having reviewed the arguments which are advanced in favour of the doctrine of the Trinity, and found them insufficient, we might look upon the question as closed ; for the doctrine is confessedly one which no one would believe except under the compulsion of irresistible proof. Nevertheless it may be well to consider some of the difficulties which it presents to the eye of reason. The vulgar outcry against the application of rational tests does not come from competent theologians, who know perfectly well that, if the laws of reason cannot be trusted, the whole fabric of revelation must tumble to pieces. Such men are quite conscious that the dogma labours under an intellectual difficulty ; but they have satisfied themselves that, though it is above reason, and can be accepted only on the authority of revelation, it



is not contrary to reason, and therefore cannot be set aside by the mere difficulty which reason experiences in endeavouring to grasp it. Let us attempt to indicate the precise points where reason interposes a query.<sup>1</sup>

It is maintained that the dogma does not involve a contradiction. If it did, this would amount to absolute disproof, for no piling up of the evidences of revealed religion could ever overthrow a fundamental law of intelligence. It is, however, true that of the various propositions which constitute the dogma no one expressly asserts what another as expressly denies; in other words, there is no explicit contradiction. Nevertheless, certain propositions seem to be involved which it is impossible for the human mind to entertain.

1. If each person has, or rather is, the whole of the Divine essence, and if that essence includes in its eternal nature a trinity of persons, then each person contains a trinity, to which in its turn the same argument may be applied; and thus we are conducted to an endless multitude. Or if, to escape this result, you say that each person contains *the* Trinity, then surely you fall into the error of confounding the persons; for if each person is in essence all three, there is no real distinction between them, and they become mere names without a difference. In this way the doctrine is self-destructive, and, whatever we may say, we are compelled in thought either to confound the persons or to divide the substance.

2. If each person has the whole essence, and at the same time has incommunicable properties which are necessary to constitute him a person, then he must have something beside the Divine essence. Or, to put it in another way, if, as Hooker says,<sup>2</sup> the three persons are distinguished by 'their several ways of having' the one substance, there must

<sup>1</sup> The various forms in which the doctrine of the Trinity has been presented have been examined, from the Unitarian side, with great acuteness by John Barling, *A Review of Trinitarianism*, London, 1847.

<sup>2</sup> *Ec. Pol.* V. lvi. 2.

in each case be something other than the Divine essence, to be distinguished by the way of having it. But by the hypothesis there is nothing else. We are required therefore to believe that a substance which is mere unity remains unalterable and self-identical, and yet at the same time is differentiated into three persons who are distinguished from one another by different properties. This borders very nearly on contradiction, and seems to me a form of words which presents no real meaning to the mind.

3. This appears to follow still more certainly from the notion that there is only one will and one reason among the three persons ; for then each person must be composed of something impersonal made personal by having the common reason and will. Thus the personality of all three is one and the same, and it is only by certain impersonal properties that they are distinguished from one another. But this is inconsistent with the notion of one sole essence, constituting the totality of each person.

4. Lastly, the idea of three persons possessing one reason and one will in common is quite unthinkable. It is reason and will that constitute personality ; and if there be only one personality, then there are not three persons, but one. It seems to me wholly impossible to think otherwise.

These difficulties cannot be evaded by calling the doctrine a mystery, before which our reason must sit dumb. The whole dogma is an attempt to translate mystery into that which is not mystery, and to present the eternal mode of the Divine existence in clearly cut intellectual propositions. These propositions appeal to reason ; and if either by themselves or in combination they bring before the mind that which has no coherent meaning, which, as I said, is unthinkable, it is only through pure self-deception that we can say we believe them. The objection to the dogma of the Trinity is not that it is a mystery, but that reason, having daringly grappled with these profound problems, has been driven on from point to point, as difficulties arose on this side and on



that, and has ultimately framed a doctrine the parts of which will not fall into a consistent whole, and cannot be held together in a single act of judgment. For my part, I think it is at once more rational and more reverent to leave these high themes undisturbed in the mystery from which the Church has vainly endeavoured to disengage them.

This might seem to be the proper place to speak severally of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The doctrines respecting these, however, will have to be discussed in other connexions. The distinct personality of God the Father and of Jesus Christ is admitted on all hands ; and the relation between them may be reserved for consideration as a part of our Christology. The effects of the Holy Spirit cannot be disregarded in noticing the life of the Church ; but though the latter forms the basis of the doctrine, and cannot be separated from it, there are certain questions which come naturally under the present head.

The origin of the Christian profession of belief in the Holy Spirit must be sought in the experience of a new Divine life within the heart. New faith, new emotions, new impulses to holiness, new discernment of spiritual truth, came upon the disciples, appealing to them with an authority, and wielding them with a power, which were not their own, so that they felt as never before that they lived and had their being in God. A breath of holy life swept through the Church ; and this was interpreted as the life of God, changing and controlling the lower human life. It was a passage from death into life,<sup>1</sup> a being born out of God,<sup>2</sup> an indwelling of God—‘ God abideth in him, and he in God.’<sup>3</sup> It made man ‘ a temple of God.’<sup>4</sup> It showed that ‘ God was really among (or, in)’ his worshippers.<sup>5</sup> I might also refer to the passages in which Christ is represented as ascribing his works and words directly to the Father. It is apparent, then, that the first Christians believed in the immediate presence of God

<sup>1</sup> I John iii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 15.

<sup>4</sup> I Cor. iii. 16.

<sup>5</sup> I Cor. xiv. 25.

among them, and in the reality of the most intimate communion with him. Why was it necessary to modify the expression of this belief?

Such language as I have quoted might seem to imply that God in the totality of his being was incarnate in each disciple. In order to avoid this, men sought for some way of describing the mode of the Divine indwelling. Just as Philo, in order to avoid the doctrine of the complete immanence of God in creation, placed him as pure Being far from all contact with material things, and regarded him as present in the universe only through his Logos or Thought, so God was conceived as present in the soul, not in the transcendent fulness of his Being, but through his Spirit. This did not mean that not God himself, but some one else was present, but only indicated the limitation and character of the Divine presence. Thus, when Paul says, 'Ye are a temple of God,' he adds, 'and the Spirit of God dwells in you';<sup>1</sup> and John says, 'We know that we abide in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.'<sup>2</sup> It is clear that the Spirit is that which comes into consciousness, and bears its own witness to its divinity. John practically identifies it with love. 'God is love';<sup>3</sup> and of love we can be conscious as a living principle in ourselves. Of this love almost the same words are used as of the Spirit: 'He that abides in love abides in God, and God in him';<sup>4</sup> 'we know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.'<sup>5</sup> The double truth of transcendence and immanence seems expressed in the words, 'No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us.'<sup>6</sup>

The word 'Spirit,' which was in both philosophical and religious use long before the founding of Christianity, was admirably adapted to express these ideas. Used in relation to persons, it denoted (among other meanings) the pervasive tone and quality of the mind, as in the words, 'ye know not

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. iii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> I John iv. 13; iii. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* iii. 14.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 12.



what manner of spirit ye are of,'<sup>1</sup> 'the spirit and power of Elijah.'<sup>2</sup> So, when it is applied to God, it refers habitually to what, for want of a better term, we must call his character, those attributes of holiness, justice, and love, which reveal themselves in human consciousness. Again, 'spirit' is used of an all-pervading energy, and in relation to God it denotes the power which issues forth, as it were, from the central personality, and works with diffused operation in the souls of men. In ancient times such attributes and powers were thought of as distinct essences, and essences came to be looked upon as persons. Our modern modes of thought are different, and to some of us at all events it has become impossible to recognize persons in love, reason, and holiness. Nevertheless, 'the power that worketh in us,'<sup>3</sup> though not a separate person, must be regarded as personal, for 'it is God who worketh in us';<sup>4</sup> and when he sends out his light and his truth to abide in us, these are not detached from him, and turned into attributes of ours, but are his own indwelling according to the measure of his gift and of our capacity.

In what way this influence is exerted, and diffused through innumerable souls, we cannot comprehend. But there is some faint analogy in the mysterious power which one human mind exercises over another. A man's spirit goes forth, and lays its impress on thousands of other minds. This spirit may extend through many lands, and come down through many ages; but it has radiated from one centre, and remains always the personal power of one commanding soul. In this way man is working for good or for evil far beyond the limits of his conscious and deliberate activity. But in the case of God we must suppose that all his sanctifying influence is in accordance with his knowledge and his will, and that he himself speaks to us through his Spirit. This

<sup>1</sup> Luke ix. 55, in the received text.

<sup>2</sup> Luke i. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iii. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Philip. ii. 13.

is the testimony of the soul, the voice of the witness within, in the moments of highest vision and communion.

We must ask, in fine, whether this view is consistent with the early confession of the Church. To me it seems entirely so. The objection that you cannot combine under the same formula a person and that which is not a person is, as we have seen, quite artificial ; and there is nothing improper or unintelligible in saying, We believe in God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and we believe in his sanctifying power in the souls of his children, and also in the holy Catholic Church and in the communion of saints, which are united into one Divine brotherhood through his all-pervading Spirit.



### CHAPTER III

#### AGENCY AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

THE principal questions respecting the agency and attributes of God must next engage our attention ; but our treatment may be comparatively brief, because in regard to those which have the most important bearing on the spiritual life there is little difference of opinion among theologians.

It is commonly assumed that God is the sole Creator of the Universe. This seems involved in the doctrine of his unity, combined with the wonderful unity and order which the universe exhibits, and which have generally led religious men to contemplate it as an expression of Divine Thought. There is, however, the difficulty occasioned by the presence of evil ; and this has persuaded many thinkers to adopt a dualistic hypothesis. Some have taken refuge in the conception of two antagonistic principles, as the Zoroastrians and Manicheans.<sup>1</sup> Others, as some of the Gnostics, have regarded the Demiurge, not indeed as evil, but as remote from and inferior to the supreme God, and so incapable of producing a perfect world. Others have tried to solve the problem by the intractable nature of matter, which made it impossible

<sup>1</sup> For dualism among the Hurons, showing how natural it is, see Max Müller, *Gifford Lectures, Natural Religion*, p. 312 sq., where he cites Horatio Hale, in the *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. I. p. 180. But dualism seems not to have belonged to the primitive teaching of Zoroastrianism. See Max Müller's *Gifford Lectures, Theosophy or Psychological Religion*, pp. 45, 51, 180.

for the Deity to carry out fully his own beneficent designs. And others again, especially in India, have adopted the hypothesis of the pre-existence of the soul, so that the ills of this life are regarded as the result of things done in a previous state of existence. None of these opinions has commanded any permanent assent among Christian theologians; and though the old Gnostic question, 'whence is evil?' still remains unanswered, nevertheless the evidence of Divine goodness in creation has generally appeared sufficient to justify our faith that the apparent defects, at least outside of the moral sphere, exist in our extremely limited view rather than in the eternal reality of things. But we must return to the problem of evil in another connexion.

If God be the sole Creator, and possessed of absolute freedom, it follows that he not only formed the world, but that he produced the very matter of which it is composed. This is the view commonly held by writers on dogmatic theology. On the one hand all self-subsistence is denied to matter; and on the other hand, although it is entirely dependent on the Divine will, it is regarded as distinct from God, so as not to be pantheistically confounded with him. Aquinas indeed describes creation as 'an emanation of all being from the universal cause, which is God.'<sup>1</sup> But he does not imply by this a proper doctrine of emanation, which would represent the universe as consisting of the very substance of God. Regarding God as the sole self-subsistent Being, he argues that all being, in whatever way it may exist, must be from God,<sup>2</sup> and hence that the primitive matter was created by God; but in defining creation as making something out of nothing<sup>3</sup> he seems to exclude identity of substance. Participation precludes identity; and matter,

<sup>1</sup> 'Emanationem totius entis a causa universali, quæ est Deus. Et hanc quidem emanationem designamus nomine creationis.' *Summa theo.* Pars I. qu. xlv. Art. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Summa*, I. xlv. 1.

<sup>3</sup> 'Creare est ex nihilo aliquid facere.' I. xlv. 1.



while participating in the being<sup>1</sup> of God, is different from God.<sup>2</sup> Other views are no doubt taken; but we need not discuss them here; for, so long as the supremacy of God, the eternal Spirit, is recognized, they involve us in philosophical rather than religious problems.

The question is also raised whether the universe is eternal. Its eternity, as we have already seen, would not be inconsistent with its dependence on the Divine will, but would only imply that God had been eternally creative. It was decided, however, on the ground of revelation that the universe began a comparatively short time ago. Aquinas says distinctly, 'That the universe had a beginning is held by faith alone; nor can this be known demonstratively.'<sup>3</sup> The actual date of the creation was determined with much nicety, one writer even thinking it 'extremely probable' that it took place about the autumnal equinox, because this was the beginning of the civil year among the Jews and other Orientals and fruits are then ripe.<sup>4</sup> Happily science has demolished these puerilities, and brought before us magnitudes of space and time which, for those who have grasped their meaning, have altered many a theological problem, and rendered for ever incredible a system of belief which was founded on the assumption that this little planet was the largest and most important member of the universe. As to the date when and the manner in which the world came into being there is no revelation. The wonderful spectacle on which we look forth upon a clear night may have a history going back for billions of years; and whether a material universe is eternal or not must be left to the dreams of philosophers. Such

<sup>1</sup> 'Essendi.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Alia a Deo.' This may be illustrated by the clear distinction drawn by Athanasius. All things, he admits, are ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, but they are κτίσμα; and the Son, the Logos, alone is οὐκ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων, but ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ θεοῦ. *Epist. de Decretis Nicaenae Synodi*, 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Summa theo.* I. xlv. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *Christian Dogmatics* by Rev. John Macpherson, 1898, p. 171.

questions seem to me beyond the reach of our faculties ; and all that we need for piety is the assurance, grounded in the religious nature of man, and most confidently held by the souls of largest growth, that over all is the supreme spiritual Power, who carries out his vast designs according to the counsels of his own will.

Scientific writers sometimes speak of evolution as though it were antithetical to creation, and assume therefore that the theological idea has been entirely exploded by recent discoveries. But this view rests upon a misconception. By creation they mean the sudden production of some complete and complex thing, in opposition to a very gradual growth ; and further, they sometimes think of creation as implying the work of an artificer, executing his plans by shaping the material from the outside, in contrast with slow formation through the action of internal forces. Such notions of creation have no doubt been held in past times, but they are not essential to the idea itself. Whether the world arose through an instantaneous *fiat* or through the operation of laws extending through millions of years, God may be equally its Creator. For this contrast has no reality, but exists only in relation to our own minds, the rapidity in the succession of our thoughts being the measure by which we judge. If a single thought required a million years for its conception, the evolution of an elephant might appear almost instantaneous, and the life-period of an oak would be too swift and sudden to come under observation<sup>1</sup> ; and, on the other hand, if we could have a million thoughts in the time occupied by a flash of lightning, the latter would

<sup>1</sup> See the perplexing questions proposed by W. R. Grove in his Address on 'Continuity,' delivered at the meeting of the British Association in 1866, published in his work on *The Correlation of Physical Forces*, 5th ed., pp. 317 sq. and 343. Except to our senses, the puzzle is as great with a microbe as an elephant or an oak, and such appeals to the imagination may be misleading. But while saying this, I fully accept the scientific evidence of 'continuity.'



seem to creep with tedious motion. Accordingly we are confronted with a difference, not in the need of an ultimate rational causality, but in the method of action which appears to us to be followed by that causality. This is, in substance, fully conceded by the late Dr. Romanes in a popular account of 'The Scientific Evidence of Organic Evolution,' published in 1882. His arguments are directed, in a somewhat controversial tone, against the theory of 'intelligent design manifested in creation'<sup>1</sup>; but by 'creation' he means something sudden, and he explains that he refers 'to design in the sense understood by the narrower forms of teleology, or as an *immediate* cause of the observed phenomena.' And then he adds, 'Whether or not there is an *ultimate* cause of a psychical kind pervading all nature, a *causa causarum* which is the final *raison d'être* of the cosmos, this is another question which, as I have said, I take to present no point of logical contact with Mr. Darwin's theory, or, I may add, with any of the methods and results of natural science.'<sup>2</sup> This, I think, is the real state of the case; and one can only regret that in working out his very lucid and convincing argument he seems to confound process and cause, and to suppose that a thing is explained the moment it is brought under a general proposition. He mentions as an example Newton's 'simple physical explanation' of the planetary motions, which superseded Kepler's supernatural explanation that 'every planet was guided in its movements by some presiding angel.'<sup>3</sup> But, so far as I can see, the law of gravitation explained nothing. It was simply a proposition which was universally applicable to a certain order of phenomena, and comprehended the three particular processes or laws discovered by Kepler; nor can I perceive that there was anything more suggestive of an angel in the fact that the

<sup>1</sup> p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> p. 15. Dr. Romanes's latest views may be seen in the posthumous *Thoughts on Religion*, edited by Charles Gore, M.A., 1895.

<sup>3</sup> p. 10.

radius vector of a planet sweeps over equal areas in equal times than in the fact that all material bodies attract one another with a force which is in proportion to the product of their masses, and in the inverse ratio of the square of their distance from one another. Such grand generalizations give a wonderful insight into the harmony of the universe, and satisfy a craving of the intellect ; and, owing to this satisfaction, they may be said, in a certain popular sense, to explain what formerly appeared to be unrelated phenomena. But, in any proper sense of the term, they explain nothing, but only describe under useful formulæ the process of innumerable isolated facts. Whatever conclusion, therefore, science may reach as to the order of phenomena, the great philosophical and religious questions remain exactly where they were, except indeed that science is bringing before us continually more and more magnificent views of the work of creative Reason, and is presenting to us a universe which, at least to our imperfect apprehension, is more worthy of the infinite Being than the comparatively minute sphere which, to our forefathers' eyes, circulated daily round the earth.

The question has been asked, Why did God create the universe ? It is a daring question, and one to which it seems more reverent to attempt no answer. In the days when our world loomed so large even in the eyes of science as practically to take the chief place in the universe, it was quite natural to suppose that the whole system of things stood in some special relation to man, and that the final cause of creation might be divined from the fortunes of our race. But to fancy that the universe which we now know, in which our earth is as a speck of dust, was created for the sake of man would betray a singular incompetence to see things in their true proportions. Nevertheless, on a more limited field we may have some perception of the truth. From the ideal which woos our aspiration we may justly infer the end of our own creation ; and from this we may roam into wider reaches of speculation, and accept our grandest



vision as affording us some glimpse of that which we cannot yet see as it is. If we remember that it is only a child's dream, serving to represent to our thought a reality which is past our finding out, we may venture to say that the universe issued from the infinite love of God, and that it was designed for the birth and growth of spiritual beings capable of love and worship. Paul's sublime idea that all creation in its upward struggle was waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God is not, in principle, altered by enlarging space and time. The only change is that mankind becomes an infinitesimal group in the vast concourse of those to whom God imparts of his own life.

It is involved in the creativeness of God that he is also the preserver of the universe ; for the preservation of that which is altogether dependent is a kind of continuous creativeness. Were the Divine power withdrawn, the universe would cease to be. Accordingly it is one of the impulses of piety to thank God for our preservation, and this side of the Divine activity is emphasized in the teaching of Christ. God causes the sun to rise, and sends the rain ; he feeds the birds, and clothes the lilies ; he gives us our daily bread, and the hairs of our heads are all numbered. And yet, in a certain sense, he is the destroyer too. The falling sparrow falls not without him ; and the grass which is so beautiful to-day, to-morrow is cast into the oven. The very idea of the phenomenal implies not only appearance, but disappearance. The clock ticks, and then that individual tick is buried for ever in the past. But there are other more impressive signs of destruction. I allude not now to devastating calamities, which are comparatively rare and exceptional, but to the fact that everything which lives is born to die. Even planets, so far as we can judge, must finish their course, and the sun yield up his light and heat ; and already a dead and desolate moon is revolving round our globe. The phenomenal, then, is continually disappearing ; and yet the universe remains, and we cannot believe



that everything is finally to lapse into an expressionless stagnation. Where, then, are we to look for the preservative action of God? We see it in the conservation of energy, and in the permanence of those laws which underlie its changing modes of manifestation; and though we cannot see it, we trust that we shall experience it in the retention of that highest form of life which is known to us as personality. It is the lower things, those which fall under the senses, that disappear; but God preserves the higher things, those great realities which can present themselves to our thought only as invisible ideas, expressed more or less clearly through the fleeting phenomena of the world.

Connected with the doctrine of God as preserver is the question whether he created the universe by a momentary act, and then, having planted in it certain regulated forces, left it to itself to go like a machine, so that phenomena are due to secondary causes, and any immediate action of God must be regarded as a miraculous interposition. This view is closely connected with the hypothesis that Christianity is a system of truths unattainable by natural means, and that it is therefore guaranteed by miracle, and in its whole character is an exception to the normal course of events, God having 'intervened' to restore the broken order of the world. Neither the thought nor the religious aspiration of the present day is satisfied with this conception of a distant God, who only occasionally 'interferes' when things have become too much deranged; and certainly Christ, as we have seen, assumes the constant agency of God, and that he is always at hand to bless and aid his children. Paul also expresses the highest spiritual faith when he says that 'from him, and through him, and unto him are all things.'<sup>1</sup> And yet when we look upon every phenomenon as an immediate expression of God's character and will, the problem of evil weighs upon the mind with an added burden; and I cannot help thinking there is some profound truth, suggestive

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 36.



of a sort of Divine absence, in the parable in which a man goes into a far country, and leaves his servants in trust to manage their own affairs. Certainly the undeviating regularity of natural law, which, in addition to its beneficent work, destroys sensitive creatures by millions with apparently indiscriminating violence, and often with terrible pain, is very unlike the freedom of human purpose, which, following the dictates of reason, adapts itself to changing circumstances ; and may we not experience some relief amid the more appalling aspects of human life if we suppose that conscious creatures have been left, within certain limits, to fight out their own destiny under fixed conditions, which will tax all their resources, and sometimes wear the appearance of a hostile power ? This slow advance through struggle and liability to suffering from the lowest form of sensation up to the free self-determination of personality, presents us with a far more fascinating world, and one constructed on a more heroic scale, than if everything were suited to our liking, and there were nothing to call forth resolution and endurance. We are thus brought back to the old distinction between what God does and what he permits. It is sometimes said that there is no real difference ; for what he permits, and could prevent, he virtually does. But I think there is a valid distinction between the direct infliction of pain and the rendering liable to pain in a scene where we must use all our resources to avoid it. The purpose of individual pain we often find it difficult or impossible to see ; but we can perceive dimly that our liability to pain may enter into the high and comprehensive purposes of supreme benevolence.

It was formerly believed that God, as Creator and Governor of the world, was surrounded by a retinue of angels, beings intermediate between God and man, whom he employed as messengers in the execution of his designs ; and it is usual for writers on dogmatics to insert a section laying down a doctrine about this heavenly hierarchy. To those



who accept the views of the Church and the Bible laid down in this work the whole subject must appear absolutely destitute of evidence. The doctrine belongs to an age of anthropomorphism and an exploded astronomy ; and an exposition of it, therefore, finds its proper place in Biblical Theology and the History of Doctrine, rather than in a systematic treatise. A discussion whether angels live in the 'highest heaven,' on which of the six days they were created, or whether on any of them, what kind of 'corporeity' and 'spirituality' they possess, how they change from place to place 'not by motion, but by the mere exercise of will to be at another point in space, without any *perceptible* interval of time,'<sup>1</sup> betrays that kind of ignorant assumption of knowledge which brings theology, and sometimes religion, into contempt with men who have not been confined in the narrow limits of a merely theological education. We may refer to angels in ordinary speech, when we wish to present a thought through the figures of poetic imagination. The stories of the appearances of angels in the Bible have a beauty of their own, and may awaken devout sentiment, when we read them in the simplicity of the ancient spirit ; but when men harden them into prosy facts, lay hold of their details, and build arguments upon them, and then lay down a doctrine as if it were a scientific truth, we can only wonder that people presumably educated in the nineteenth century write as though they had been born and brought up in the second. To say that 'the antithesis of the acceptance and rejection of the doctrine of angels is that of theism and pantheism'<sup>2</sup> is to commit oneself to an assertion which, so far as I can see, is absolutely baseless. If the doctrine be reduced to the bare statement that there may be somewhere rational beings who are inferior to God and superior to man, I presume no one will care to deny it, for we are absolutely without knowledge in the matter ;

<sup>1</sup> Macpherson, *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> Macpherson, p. 216, referring to Philippi's argument against Strauss.



but this is not the doctrine of angels implied in the Bible, and set forth in the teachings of the Church.

We must next refer very briefly to the great attributes which are involved in our intellectual idea of God, and nevertheless are quite beyond our comprehension.

Different modes of classifying the Divine attributes have been proposed ; but as these do not ultimately affect our doctrine, we need not pause to discuss them. It is a more serious question whether, in ascribing attributes to God at all, we do not violate the Divine unity by implying that several different qualities are superadded to his essential being. To escape from this difficulty some have believed that the attributes are purely nominal distinctions, due to our imperfect apprehension, and having no reality in God himself. Others (and this seems a truer view) regard the attributes as expressive, not of any manifoldness within the Divine essence, but of the varying modes in which the indivisible essence of God is related to the manifoldness of the world. Thus, when we speak of his thought, of his love, of his will, we recognize a real distinction in the method of his activity, but do not intend to separate his being into several departments or faculties by the union of which he subsists. We must be content with these few remarks on this difficult problem, and now proceed to notice the attributes one by one.

In what has been said thus far we have taken the view that God is at once transcendent above the universe and immanent in it : that is, he is distinct from the world, not pantheistically identified with it, and, as supreme Cause, producing the universe by an act of volition, he has not exhausted in the effect the possibilities of existence ; and, on the other hand, he has not sent creation upon its lonely course, but continually supplies the energy without which it would cease to be. This view implies his omnipresence. How this is to be intellectually conceived, whether as an essential or only a dynamical presence, we cannot here discuss, if indeed it is

a fit subject for discussion ; for we can only speculate on the mode in which God, who is pure Spirit, and exempt from all the conditions of space, is nevertheless present in all objects situated in space. We need only say that wherever our research can penetrate, the same all-controlling power is revealed, and science gives us no reason to doubt, but on the contrary has furnished many wonderful confirmations of the view, that the same majestic laws which express the Divine thought on our earth are operative in the farthest star that the photographic plate can disclose. More immediately convincing is the testimony of the religious heart, which knows no difference from change of place. The secret witness of the Spirit goes wherever we go ; and wherever worshippers are found they have the conviction that God is with them.

The attribute of omniscience seems involved in our idea of perfect being. It is always assumed by the Biblical writers that God knows all things, and the religious nature of man contentedly accepts this as a fundamental truth. But on these grand themes it seems to me most reverent not to speculate. The consciousness of a dog is an inscrutable mystery ; and shall we presume to describe the mode of the Divine knowledge ? We can believe that that which is knowledge in us is a faint beam from the eternal light, which justifies us in describing as knowledge that which is to us so entirely incomprehensible ; but we must not pretend to interpret the psychology of God. We must, however, mention briefly the problems which are discussed in dogmatic theology. It is usually assumed that God's knowledge is intuitive, embracing in one view the past, the present, and the future, and thus distinguished from the discursive and mediate knowledge of man. In regard to its object it is divided into natural or necessary and free.<sup>1</sup> The objects of his natural knowledge are God himself and the world of possibility, which has an ideal existence in him. The free

<sup>1</sup> *Naturalis* or *necessaria*, and *libera*.



knowledge is that of the actual, extraneous to God himself, and therefore dependent on his free volition. Another division is into the 'knowledge of simple intelligence,' which embraces the possible, and 'knowledge of vision,' which refers to the real, including God himself.<sup>1</sup> These distinctions are more subtle than illuminating. On a more important point, that concerning the relation between God's omniscience and the free will of man, the greatest divergence of opinion has arisen. Some maintain that in granting free will God has by his own act limited his knowledge. For instance, Mr. Upton remarks that 'the giving of real freedom of moral choice, while retaining at the same time ability to foresee how that power will be exercised . . . appears in the light of human reason to be intrinsically inconceivable and impossible.'<sup>2</sup> It is objected to this view that by introducing a limitation (albeit a self-imposed limitation) into the Divine Being it destroys the absolute nature of God, and therefore cannot be conceded by any theologian who accepts as fundamental the thesis that God is the absolute. Others get rid of the difficulty by the doctrine of determinism. But this is objected to as subordinating moral facts, which are attested by consciousness, to a metaphysical dogma, which, as being a matter of speculation, cannot claim the same degree of certainty. In order to reconcile these conflicting views it has been maintained, both in ancient and in modern times, that God's knowledge of the future is as immediate as our knowledge of the present; and as our knowledge of a present action does not interfere with its liberty, so God's foreknowledge of an event which is not immediately dependent on his creative act does not necessitate it. Accordingly, if that

<sup>1</sup> *Scientia simplicis intelligentiae*, and *scientia visionis*. See F. A. B. Nitzsch, *Lehrb. der evan. Dogmatik*, 1896, p. 394.

<sup>2</sup> *The Inquirer*, 15 April, 1899, p. 229. See also letters in subsequent numbers. See further Dr. Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, II. pp. 272 sqq. Professor Wendt takes the same view in his *System der christlichen Lehre*, 1906, p. 204.



event be an act of free will, it is not determined by the Divine foreknowledge, but itself determines, within its own limits, the contents of that foreknowledge.<sup>1</sup> These high themes we must now leave to the metaphysicians, and to the fallen angels. If, however, we turn from these theoretical questions to the practical needs of piety, it is clear that this attribute comes very close to our religious nature. The testimony of the spirit receives a noble expression in the 139th Psalm. 'God knows' is a spontaneous exclamation of the devout and trustful soul. The heart bears about the consciousness of a Divine witness of the most secret thoughts and feelings, and no lonely hour of unfaithfulness escapes the remonstrance of this unseen Judge. Or in some act of self-renunciation an inner word of approval is breathed from him who cannot err; and when we are called to stand fast against the opposition and condemnation of men, a hidden and silent verdict is mightier far than all the clamour of the crowd. In this we may rest with confidence, though such knowledge is too wonderful for us.

The omnipotence of God follows from the doctrine that he is the sole ultimate Cause; for this implies that there is nothing that can resist his will, and that he is not in any way governed by conditions extraneous to himself. Strictly speaking, the omnipotence of God cannot be inferred from the manifestations of power in the universe; for we do not know that the universe is infinite. Nevertheless, the vastness of the universe so far surpasses our imagination that it ministers abundantly to those feelings of awe and that sense of the sublime which are laid so deep in our religious

<sup>1</sup> Lotze solves the difficulty by supposing that God's knowledge 'does not itself share in that characteristic of being in time which it perceives in its objects.' Hence 'the entire reality, which for us unfolds itself as a succession, is present all at once to the eye of God'; and accordingly he admits that 'knowledge of what is free is possible,' but declares that 'a fore-knowledge of it is inconceivable.' *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, by Hermann Lotze, edited by F. C. Conybeare, M.A., pp. 119 sq.



nature ; and the displays of power which we behold are, for practical effect, tantamount to the infinite, our own derived and dependent power appearing in comparison as a drop drawn from a boundless ocean.

In connexion with the omnipotence of God the question has been raised whether he can work miracles. The subject of miracles would require a long discussion to determine their relation to Christian theology, and here a very few words must suffice. That God has both the power and the freedom to work miracles, if he sees fit to do so, and is not a blind force dragged along by an irresistible destiny, no theist can deny ; and the only problem is whether, as a matter of fact, there is evidence that the miraculous does really come within the modes of his operation, or whether, within the limited range of our experience, he has always proceeded by the same steadfast methods. Presented in this way, the inquiry, though involving most important and fundamental issues, is historical rather than theological.

The idea of omnipotence has been extended so as to include the ability to do any conceivable thing ; and this view has been founded on the words of Christ, ' With God all things are possible.'<sup>1</sup> But utterances of this kind are not meant to express a universal dogma, and must be limited by the context. The statement in question refers only to the solution of a moral difficulty which is beyond the unaided power of man. Christ says with the same absoluteness that, if men have faith as a grain of mustard seed, nothing shall be impossible to them<sup>2</sup> ; but no one supposes that this statement is without rational limitations. It is not, therefore, inconsistent with Christ's doctrine if theologians, following Origen and Augustine, have maintained that there are certain things which God cannot do. He cannot die ; he cannot lose his perfection ; he cannot sin ; he cannot make that which has happened not have happened ; he cannot act in contradiction with himself.<sup>3</sup> Such statements,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xvii. 20.

<sup>3</sup> See Nitzsch, p. 389.



however, do not indicate the presence of anything which, by its own superior force, can thwart his will, and therefore do not seem properly opposed to the most absolute doctrine of his omnipotence.

Another curious question is discussed in this connexion. John of Damascus taught that God has power to do whatever he wills, but he does not will whatever he has power to do, for he has power to destroy the world, but he does not will it.<sup>1</sup> In opposition to this Abélard maintained that God can do nothing but what he does. In modern times Schleiermacher adopted this view, holding it to be inconsistent with the perfection of God to make any separation between can and will.<sup>2</sup> Nitzsch also supports it, on the ground that whatever is really possible, being good, must be realized, and could not be withheld, by the will of God, which is good; and so he maintains that God could not destroy the world, owing to the holy love which belongs to his essence.<sup>3</sup> It seems to me that the latter argument is founded on an ambiguous use of the word 'can.' No doubt God cannot act in opposition to his own holy nature; but if on this account he will not destroy the world, it does not follow that he does not possess the force which is adequate to destroy it, if it were otherwise directed. Moreover experience hardly justifies these *a priori* conclusions. Constant change is going on around us, and new things continually appear; have these suddenly become good, and would they have been bad if they had appeared a year or two sooner? And can we seriously think that an animal or a plant, and especially each individual animal or plant, would have been bad if it had been slightly different from what it is? Surely the universe suggests to us a vast range of possibilities within the good, which as a fact are not all realized. These, however, are speculative questions, which

<sup>1</sup> Πάντα μὲν ὅσα θέλει δύναται, οὐχ ὅσα δὲ δύναται θέλει. Quoted by Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube*, I, p. 284, note.

<sup>2</sup> *Der chr. Glaube*, § 54.

<sup>3</sup> *Lehrb. d. e. Dogm.* pp. 390 sq.



have little practical bearing. For our religious requirements it is enough that we can have a moral trust that the amazing power displayed throughout the universe is under the guidance of perfect goodness, and that in all our weakness and need we can look to a strength which is sufficient for the fulfilment of the purposes of Divine love.

We must pass now to certain conceptions which are more immediately connected with the religious nature of man, and have to contemplate God as the reality of ideal good. We are thus introduced to certain moral predicates, and to those spiritual relations which make God an object of worship.

First, we must treat of the holiness of God. This is referred to so frequently in the Bible that it is unnecessary to cite particular passages, especially as it is recognized by every school of theologians as inherent in the Divine nature. But when we inquire into the precise meaning which was originally attached to the term, we raise a question which must be settled by Biblical theology, and which it is not necessary to discuss at present. I may say, however, for myself, that I think it always contains a moral implication. Even if the fundamental idea be that of separation from and elevation above the world, still this does not express mere power or duration or magnitude, but a remoteness from all that is impure and sinful, combined with a righteous and authoritative will which requires something in man answering to itself. The commandment, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy,' cannot enjoin any metaphysical distinction from the world, but only some sort of moral purification. Be this as it may, the idea of the holiness of God which belongs to Christian theology is that of supreme moral perfection, including such exaltation above all that is transient and earthly as to awaken our awe, and bow us down in veneration and worship. Holiness in a man has an analogous effect, and seems to bring us into the presence of something more divine than our ordinary life. And yet holiness in man has characteristics which we cannot ascribe



to God. Especially it implies conformity to a rule, which, though it may enter into his consciousness, is extraneous and superior to himself. This has led to the conception of an abstract and eternal law to which all spiritual beings must submit, and which is binding on God himself; and language is sometimes used which seems to imply that there is a principle of moral good which is above God, and exacts from him, as from us, a voluntary obedience. Hence arose the question whether the good is good because God wills it, or God wills it because it is good. The one member of the alternative seems to make the good something arbitrary, and intrinsically capable of being reversed; and the second appears to dethrone God, and make him subject to something higher than himself. The best answer to this perplexity is to say that the good belongs to the eternal essence of God, so that in willing the good he does not submit to any extraneous principle, but expresses his own immutable being. In speaking, therefore, of the holiness of God we regard him, not as virtuous through obedience to the moral law, but as the absolute reality of moral perfection, the eternal centre of unacquired purity and exaltation.

When we pass on to the righteousness of God, we regard his holiness as entering into active relations with morally constituted beings, who are capable of ethical good and ill. This righteousness has been described by dogmatists as exercising two principal functions, legislative and judicial;<sup>1</sup> and the latter, again, as manifesting itself in the two directions of reward and punishment.<sup>2</sup> That the moral law is an expression of the Divine will, and that God administers that law through a system of rewards and punishments, is a doctrine both of the Old and of the New Testament. 'God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap';<sup>3</sup> 'God will render to every man according to his works';<sup>4</sup> these statements express a pervasive and funda-

<sup>1</sup> *Justitia legislatoria, and judicialis.*

<sup>2</sup> *Remuneratoria and punitiva.*

<sup>3</sup> Gal. vi. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. ii. 6.



mental thought both of Judaism and of Christianity, and their truth is recognized by the natural conscience, which attests the immediate presence of a Divine authority, and, under the sense of sin, has premonitions of a judgment to come. But when we ask, what is the rule of justice by which rewards and punishments are distributed, the answer is by no means easy ; and since on our answer important doctrinal issues depend, we must proceed carefully in seeking a solution.

Punishment has been divided into retributive and educational. Retributive punishment is that whereby expiation is made for the violation of the moral law, and accordingly it is inflicted in a measure corresponding to the measure of guilt. As, however, there is no absolute standard by which guilt and punishment can be measured in relation to one another, justice consists in the maintenance of the same standard in all cases. Educational punishment aims at securing a certain result in the character, and its measure is determined by the realization of this aim.<sup>1</sup> From this mode of regarding the subject it necessarily follows that God cannot forgive, in the sense of remitting any portion of the punishment which retributive justice has assigned to a particular measure of guilt ; for to do so would be to act unjustly. It is strange to find this view put forward with the utmost explicitness by Miss Cobbe. ‘Justice,’ she says, ‘demands that no infraction of the moral law shall pass unexpiated by a corresponding amount of suffering’ ; and again, ‘Justice requires that towards the *guilty* he who holds its “balance and rod” shall withhold happiness and inflict punishment in exact proportion to the guilt.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So Kaftan, *Dogmatik*, pp. 333 and 337. Kaftan might escape from the criticism which I venture to pass upon this view, because, if I understand him correctly, he regards punishment simply as spiritual deadening, and this is of course proportioned to the sin. But then sin is itself spiritual deadening, so that the latter cannot properly be regarded as the punishment of the former. Punishment always includes the idea of suffering on account of some previous offence, and it is only the suffering which follows spiritual deadness that can be viewed as punishment.

<sup>2</sup> *Intuitive Morals*, p. 57.



Now I think it cannot be denied that the idea of retributive justice is planted very deeply in our moral constitution, and that apart from retribution we cannot properly speak of punishment. We are plunged into painful perplexity when the wicked man is crowned with blessings, while the righteous is worn down with misery ; and when we hear of some peculiarly atrocious deed, we have an instinctive feeling that the perpetrator deserves to be severely punished. Separated from this desert, which is created by previous guilt, pain ceases to be punishment, and we never describe as punishment pain which is inflicted solely with a view to some future effect. If this be so, the division of punishments into retributive and educational is not sound. Punishment may be educational ; but it is not punishment unless it has reference to some past state or act which deserves it, or, in other words, unless it is retributive. Nevertheless, I do not believe that the notion of precise equivalents of guilt and pain is tenable. It is admitted that we cannot know the measure, and therefore cannot determine the corresponding amount of pain ; but I must go further, and maintain that the measure of punishment does not lie in the enormity of the past guilt, but in the accomplishment of certain effects. Can sin really be expiated by a corresponding amount of suffering ? Can pain restore the moral balance which has been lost ? Would a world infinitely sinful and infinitely miserable, one, that is, in which sins were expiated as fast as they were committed, be in a state of moral equilibrium ? It appears to me that wickedness and suffering are absolutely incommensurable, and that the idea of corresponding amounts of guilt and woe has therefore no basis in reality. Let us only endeavour to estimate, even approximately, what intensity and duration of toothache would correspond to the guilt of a lie, and we shall feel that we are dealing with quantities which have no common standard. But if there be no common standard, justice cannot demand as an expiation of the lie ' a corresponding



amount of suffering'; for there is no such corresponding amount.

What interpretation, then, is to be put upon punishment, which plays so important a part in our moral life? The fact that it always has reference to past ill-desert does not deprive it of all purpose, and reduce it to an act of aimless vengeance; and, in relation to the offender, there are two great purposes which it appears to answer.

First, it is a strong and unmistakable expression of moral disapproval. Where mere remonstrance might be unheeded, it speaks in a language which cannot be misunderstood; and the deeper the love of the person by whom it is inflicted, the more impressive is this manifestation of displeasure. This is surely one of the main purposes which the existence of punishment answers in the Divine government. If God bestowed equal happiness on the righteous and the wicked, it might be argued that he was indifferent to the distinction between right and wrong, and looked with no disapproving eye on the guilty. But the misery which follows upon sin comes to the aid of our conscience, and warns us that the Holy One regards our conduct with disfavour. The amount of punishment required to express this disapproval depends, not on the enormity of the sin, but on the sensibility of the conscience. There are occasions when moral disapproval is far more forcibly impressed upon the offender without the infliction of punishment; and it must be admitted that in such cases, as when Christ turned and looked upon the faithless Peter, the moral effect is higher and purer than when the conscience can be reached only through the instrumentality of suffering.

The other great purpose answered by punishment is that it opposes a barrier to the further commission of wrongdoing. Men do wrong in the pursuit of some real or fancied pleasure, or to avoid the pain of controlling their lower passions and desires. Now the law of retribution blocks the path of guilty self-interest, and checks the progress of sin

through that very principle the abuse of which is the root of sin. It proclaims that selfishness shall never succeed ultimately in attaining its end, but is a power as blind as it is criminal. It is difficult to imagine any other way in which obedience to the moral law could be enforced upon those who chose to disregard its precepts. Punishment appeals to them on their own ground, and introduces a motive which must enter into the calculations even of the most depraved. Here, again, the amount of punishment depends, not on the greatness of the offence, against which, as we have seen, it cannot be balanced, but on the readiness of the offender to succumb. The punishment which is sufficient to act as a deterrent is, in this respect, the maximum which justice will demand.

If the above view be correct, it is evident that even absolute justice may remit a part or the whole of a punishment upon a certain condition, namely, that the ends which the punishment was designed to secure have been already attained. Indeed, this principle would apply pre-eminently to the case of justice aided by omniscience, and can be only partially acted upon by human justice. In the administration of human law it is necessary to proceed by general rules, because it is impossible to determine the precise mental condition of each offender, and any uncertainty in regard to the infliction of punishment is apt to be attended with disastrous effects. But even here we feel that there is no infringement of justice in remitting a portion of the penalty upon clear evidence of moral reformation in the offender. We also feel that it is consistent with justice to inflict increasingly severe punishments for successive infractions of the same law ; for these infractions prove that the preventive stage has not been reached. Where there is a probability that the conscience may be touched by purely moral means we are justified in diminishing the amount of punishment ; and it is easy to imagine a case where the penalty ought to be remitted entirely. It would not be just, but preposterous and wicked,



to impose a long term of penal servitude upon a man if we could have absolute certainty that his mind had experienced a complete moral change, and that henceforward, if his liberty were granted him, he would not only cease to be dangerous to society, but would be one of its most devoted servants and benefactors. Of course we cannot in any instance be certain of this but were we endowed with higher gifts, could we search the heart and anticipate the future, we might discover cases of complete repentance and reformation, where the punishment ought to be totally remitted, a far grander power having wrought the change which punishment is designed to accomplish, and extirpated that idolatry of self which is the root of sin. It would appear, then, that absolute justice is not precluded from the exercise of forgiveness, in the sense of remitting a part or the whole of a penalty, upon repentance and reformation. In New Testament language, if we confess our sins, God is just to forgive us.<sup>1</sup>

The Wisdom of God requires only a few words. It is referred to both in the Old and the New Testament, and is that attribute whereby, through orderly arrangement and the adaptation of means to ends, he carries out his purposes in the creation and government of the world. It is, accordingly, revealed to us, in such measure as we are able to comprehend it, through the contemplation of nature, the study of history, and the experience of our own lives.

Love is, in Christianity, the highest attribute of God ; so much so that in the first Epistle of John<sup>2</sup> it is represented as the essence of God—‘ God is love.’ The Scriptures know nothing of an opposition between the righteousness and the love of God, which has been so much insisted on by theologians ; but this verse implicitly contradicts the notion that righteousness, in the sense of punitive justice, belongs to the essence of God, whereas the exercise of love depends on his volition, and cannot take place till the higher attribute is satisfied. It is also repeatedly pointed out by writers on

<sup>1</sup> I John i. 9.

<sup>2</sup> iv. 8, 16.

this subject that God's love is not mere good-nature, put forth without any moral guidance, though I am not aware that anyone ever supposed that it was. The moral advantage is wholly on the side of the Apostle's view. If God's essence were punitive justice, we might do what we like, and brave the punishment. But it is his love which makes sin so horrible, and ingratitude so black. It is his love which, so far from making him indifferent to sin, renders it, if we may use human language, so bitterly painful to his Fatherly heart. For sin is the deadly enemy of love ; and the loveless and the loving cannot blend in any holy communion. This love is more than the kindness and goodwill which may be exercised towards all sentient creatures, and expresses rather the relation in which God stands towards spiritual beings who can reciprocate it—' We love him because he first loved us.'<sup>1</sup> It is manifested chiefly in the communication of itself, and it is only through love that we can enter into perfect communion with God. ' Love is from God,' and ' He that abideth in love abideth in God, and God in him.'<sup>2</sup> Being thus the essence of God, it may be spoken of as the ' eternal life ' ; and the latter describes, in another phrase, the highest gift which God bestows upon his children. As loving, he communicates of himself, of his own life and spirit, so that they who receive this life are born from him, and are truly his sons. When the emphasis is laid on the free and undeserved nature of the Divine love, flowing forth with powerful manifestation in order to convince and win the estranged heart, it is called grace. Christianity claims to be such a manifestation, and to bring the saving love of God close to the human soul ; and it is difficult to see how spiritual love, the eternal spiritual life of God, can be revealed except in and through man, for man alone, in this world, is a spiritual being, in whom love can become an element of conscious experience. But the full unfolding of this thought must be reserved for a later chapter.

<sup>1</sup> I John iv. 19.

<sup>2</sup> I John iv. 7, 16.



## CHAPTER IV

### GOD AS THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP

HAVING considered the nature and attributes of God, we now proceed to regard him as the object of worship to all who are capable of the sentiments implied in worship ; and we have to view the different aspects under which he appears to the mind of the worshipper.

First, he is the object of our highest veneration and love, because he has in himself supreme spiritual perfection. The feelings associated with worship, and the modes in which it is expressed, have undergone a long development as man's conceptions of God have slowly risen to higher levels, and the awe and terror of the savage before the tremendous and hostile forces of nature have gradually yielded to faith in a righteous government which is above nature. Christian worship recognizes no local or partial Deity, but the universal and eternal Spirit, who is to be worshipped in spirit and truth, not for anything that he has done for us in the past or is expected to do in the future, but simply for his own adorable perfection ; and that is the highest moment of worship when all sense of time and place and accident is forgotten, when every thought of self is laid aside, and the rapt soul is filled only with the consciousness of God as the absolutely good.

Secondly, he reveals himself as the bounteous Giver ; and therefore the pure admiration of worship must often yield to gratitude for the benefits which he has conferred upon ourselves. The injunction to be thankful we feel to be right and reasonable, and all murmuring and discontent

bring upon us a Divine rebuke ; for how countless are the gifts of God, how constant the blessings by which he has sought our hearts. Accordingly, thanksgiving occupies, as it ought to do, an important place in our ordinary worship.

Our third head requires a much longer treatment. God is the object of trust, as being the wise disposer of all things. This statement implies a doctrine of providence, which is so close to the deepest sources of religion in the human mind that it formed a subject for pious faith and earnest discussion in pre-Christian times, and not only Jews, but Greeks and Romans, believed that the world was under a Divine government, and made the difficulties which are suggested by the actual course of events a theme for philosophical reflection. According to Macpherson 'it was left for Christian theology . . . to work out the doctrine of providence in its application to the personal life of the individual man,' and 'the limitations of the ethnic philosophy of religion scarcely permitted this perception of anything further than a conception of God's care for the course of the world as a whole. "Magna dii curant ; parva negligunt."'<sup>1</sup> This, I think, is rather a misleading representation. The Latin words, which are quoted without a reference, are from a passage in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*,<sup>2</sup> where it is contended that if the gods care for the whole, they must care for the parts ; if for Europe, then for Rome and Athens ; and if for Rome, then for individuals, Fabricius, Gracchus, Cato. The words which are cited are introduced, not to show that God does not care for individuals, but, on the contrary, to prove that the trifling misfortunes which happen to men are not inconsistent with the regard bestowed by Divine providence on the welfare of individuals. Plato, however, rejects even this qualification of the minute care which is exercised by the gods, and, in arguing distinctly against the thesis which Macpherson quotes as characteristic of ancient philosophy, endeavours to show that the gods are no less careful of small

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Dogmatics*, pp. 175 sq.

<sup>2</sup> ii. 66.



things than of those distinguished by their size.<sup>1</sup> On this question there were naturally different opinions,<sup>2</sup> owing to the difficulties which arise when we attempt to adjust all the perplexing phenomena of nature and life within the limits of an intellectual scheme. But the fact that such problems were discussed, and that in spite of adverse appearances some of the noblest minds of antiquity confided in a supreme overruling goodness, shows how deeply the belief in Divine providence is rooted in the religious nature of man. Christianity assumes that this belief is incontrovertible, and proclaims the fatherly care of God in the minutest circumstances of life. Christ, resting not on the speculations of philosophy, but on the intuitions of faith, declares that God clothes the lilies and feeds the birds, that not a sparrow falls without him, and the very hairs of our heads are all numbered; and this view is associated with the trust that all is well which arises in every mind in proportion as it is penetrated with the Christian spirit.

In reducing the contents of this trust to an intellectual form the dogmatists have displayed a careful, if not always a very profitable power of analysis. Providence may be defined as that mode of the Divine agency by which all events are adapted to the supreme end of creation. According to Lutheran theologians it is exhibited in the three distinct forms of *conservatio*, *concursus*, and *gubernatio*. Of the preservation of the world we have already spoken. *Concursus*, or the co-operation of God with the agency of secondary causes, describes rather a method in which he carries on his government than a distinct and co-ordinate exercise of activity. The union of God's immediate with his mediate causation gives rise to subtle questions, into which we need not enter; but we may notice the part played by *concursus* in criminal actions. The murderer could not

<sup>1</sup> Ὡς ἐπιμελεῖς σμικρῶν εἰςὶ θεοὶ οὐχ ἥττον ἢ τῶν μεγέθει διαφερόντων  
*Leg. X.* 10, p. 900 C. sqq., referred to by J. B. Mayor in his note on Cicero.

<sup>2</sup> See several references in Mayor.



strike his blow unless a power not his own enabled him to lift his arm and wield his weapon. In theological language it is said that God supplies the material element of the action, that is to say, the mechanical movements of which it consists, while the formal part, its sinful quality, proceeds from the man himself. Leaving this, we may confine our attention to *gubernatio*, the government of the world; and here we shall do well to remember that our point of view is limited to our own little planet, and that what we are able to observe or to believe is probably an insignificant part of a vast and incomprehensible scheme, which, if fully known, might relieve the difficulties which now prove a trial to our faith.

It has been pointed out that the providential government of the world implies foreknowledge, whereby God anticipates what is conducive to the well-being of creation; purpose, which is directed towards the fulfilment of the Divine end; and administration, which continually controls the course of events so that this purpose may be fulfilled. The highest purpose towards man which it is possible for us to conceive, and which reveals itself in the innermost depths of the Christian life, is to bring him into perfect filial union with God; and accordingly, in judging of the action of providence from our own experience, we must regard this as the controlling end, to which all else, including our happiness, must be subordinate. A difficulty is created by the existence of free will, by which the designs of God might be frustrated, and which in single instances does really act in contravention of the Divine will. In order to meet this difficulty providence has been analysed into four elements, *permissio*, *impeditio*, *directio*, *determinatio*. Permission relates to moral evil, which, as the necessary condition of moral and responsible life, is permitted, but not created, by God. By prevention God stops the occurrence of certain actions, and thereby obviates the results which would otherwise have followed. Direction is defined as the act whereby God so



directs the good deeds of his creatures that they conduce to the end at which he aims, and also gives to their bad deeds a tendency towards an end which is determined by him, but not perceived by the sinners, and often quite opposed to their purpose. Thus he brings good out of evil, and compels even the wicked to subserve his aims. Determination is the act by which God sets fixed limits to the activity of his creatures, both in regard to time and in regard to magnitude and degree, so that the effects of evil can never transgress certain bounds.<sup>1</sup> Such considerations relieve the apparent contradiction between the two beliefs, that the world is governed by Divine providence and that men have the power of free self-determination. The fulfilment of human purposes, and still more the results which spring from the execution of these purposes, are subject to the control of God apart from any interference with the liberty of man. According to the proverb, which is an expression of human experience, man proposes, but God disposes; and, consequently, the results of the free activity of man may be confined within such narrow limits as not to prevent the ultimate realization of God's designs in the education of the world.

In regard to the means by which the government of the world is carried on it may be sufficient to say that providence has been divided into ordinary and extraordinary, the former referring to the prevalence of universal laws, the latter to the use of miracles. In relation to its objects it has been classified as general, special, and most special, the first referring to the world at large, the second to men collectively and individually, and the last to believers. This division is of no great value, and may even give rise to narrow and prejudiced views, unless it means that just in proportion as creatures come spiritually nearer to God they are more directly and consciously under the Divine influence. If it lead men to trust in themselves that they are righteous,

<sup>1</sup> See Nitzsch, pp. 368 sq.; Grimm, p. 260, note 1.

and despise others, and to imagine that God cares more for them than for the rest of mankind, it can do nothing but mischief.

The acceptance of the foregoing doctrine of providence is hampered by a serious difficulty. If, by a process of reasoning, we constructed in imagination such a world as a perfectly good, wise, and powerful Being would create, it would be widely different from that which we actually observe. Here faith and experience confront one another with an antagonistic look, which requires explanation, and which is probably at the present day the deepest source of religious doubt. We have already touched upon the problem of evil ; but it is in connexion with the doctrine of providence that the difficulty presses most heavily. The apparent inconsistency between the intuitions of faith and the results of observation was a theme for earnest discussion long before the Christian era ; and especially by the Stoics subtle suggestions were made in vindication of the ways of God. In modern times the subject has been discussed under the name of Theodicy, the justification of God, a word without classical support, and said to have been first employed by Leibniz in his *Essais de Théodicée sur la Bonté de Dieu, la Liberté de l'Homme, et l'Origine du Mal*, published in 1710.<sup>1</sup> Our review of this difficult question must necessarily be very brief.

Evil has been divided into physical and moral, to which Leibniz adds metaphysical, which consists in simple imperfection.<sup>2</sup> Moral evil, although it is obviously opposed to the Divine end in creation, occasions less perplexity than physical ; for the possibility of sin seems necessarily involved in the creation of free moral agents. God, therefore, while permitting the existence of sin, is not its author ; and in endowing man with liberty of choice between good and ill

<sup>1</sup> Leibniz himself explains Théodicée as ' la justice de Dieu,' in a letter to Thomas Burnett, quoted in Gerhardt's edition of his *Philosophische Schriften* ; sechster Band, 1885, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Essais*, p. 115.



he created a far higher being than if he had made him the unresisting puppet of an enforced innocence. Where the real trouble comes in is in the enormous power which the wicked are allowed to exercise over their victims, the fiendish cruelties which make history a sickening study, the sated prosperity of successful villainy amid the tears and groans of inoffensive suffering. Yet even here there is some relief ; for amid these horrors we see a training in heroic virtue, and a wakening of all that is noblest in human nature to contend against evil and make good triumphant. There is something in the highest form of tragedy that speaks with pathetic power to the heart. The suffering of the martyr is the seed of righteousness in a thousand souls ; and he who is chief of martyrs has shown how love is stronger than pain, and how the righteous will can enter into the redeeming purpose of God, and in co-operating with him offer the supreme sacrifice. It has been pointed out, moreover, that, though providence permits the varying strife between good and ill, its forces are on the side of righteousness, and that wickedness tends to disintegration, and, through consequent loss of power, to ultimate collapse. We may also observe that the power which the bad exert over the good is only the dark side of that solidarity of the human race without which our sweetest blessings, and indeed all civilization and progress, would be impossible, so that the accompanying evils are an abuse of a grand and indispensable gift, and, though not prevented, lie outside of the Divine purpose.

The problem of pain is of a different kind ; for pain seems opposed, not to the righteousness, but to the benevolence of God. The difficulty, moreover, covers a much larger field ; for pain is not confined to men, but, so far as we can judge, affects the whole sentient creation. Schleiermacher, indeed, expressly excludes from the problem everything that is not related to man, and is thus able to defend his thesis that evil is a collective punishment for the sin of the race—collective, because pain is not proportioned to the



sin of individuals.<sup>1</sup> But at the present day we cannot limit our sympathies to our own race. Pain and death existed long before the appearance of man upon the earth ; and on many minds the question presses with serious weight, how can God, who is love, inflict, or allow to be inflicted, such awful tortures, not only upon men, in whose case pain may have some connexion with the moral life, and prove a wholesome discipline, but upon the lower animals, where no such connexion is discoverable ? No one has succeeded in fully answering this question, or suggesting more than palliatives for the distress which it occasions. In order to form a just judgment it would be necessary for us, first of all, to know certain facts, which it is impossible for us to ascertain with exactness ; for, though in principle our problem would be raised by even the smallest amount of pain, we should be affected very differently by different degrees in the extent and severity of pain. A world in which pain enormously preponderated, while pleasure seemed the accident of an hour, might make it impossible to believe in a kindly providence ; whereas, if the amount of pain be small in proportion to happiness, we may be able, though we cannot explain it, to trust that it is permitted for a wise purpose, and is not inconsistent with the lovingkindness of God. Now, just at the present time, our sympathies, and perhaps our own shrinking from pain, tend to concentrate all our attention on the suffering in the world, so that we are apt to conjure up a picture of creation which I believe is a hideous caricature. The sum of happiness among sentient creatures probably preponderates enormously over the amount of misery ; and the saying that God's 'tender mercies are over all his works'<sup>2</sup> rested on a wide and general, if not a very minute and observant, experience. It is a just inference that the Creator desires to deal kindly with his creatures, and that on the whole he does so. Another fact which materially affects the problem, but lies beyond the limits of exact

<sup>1</sup> *Der christ. Glaube*, § 75.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm cxlv. 9.



investigation, is the degree of pain which is felt by animals. There are, I think, some reasons for supposing that it is at all events less than the sympathy of our highly strung organism leads us to imagine. Still, when we make every deduction, there is an amount and degree of pain which we could not ourselves think it right to inflict, and which we are at present unable to reconcile with perfect benevolence.

Another palliative may be found in the thought that the purpose of pain in the abstract is not to afflict, but to promote the interests of the creature suffering it. It serves as a warning that there is something wrong in the system, and rouses the animal to defensive or remedial measures ; and in the case of man it also acts as a check upon wrongdoing, and helps to develop and strengthen his virtues. A further consideration arises from the necessity of governing the world by general laws, without which there would be no order or stability, and consequently no science, nor any of that foresight which is necessary to train the intellect and will ; and laws which are convenient for the whole may sometimes appear disadvantageous to individuals. We may place in this category the Stoical contention already adverted to, that we must not judge of the Divine purpose from the by-products or concomitants of larger movements.

Such reflections may to some extent relieve our difficulties, and help our faith that evil is permitted for the sake of a larger and higher good than would be otherwise attainable ; but there is no complete solution of the problem. We know only in part, and must trust where we cannot see. When we reach a more elevated point of view, all may become clear ; and meanwhile, walking by faith and not by sight, we must rest in the love of God, which is guaranteed by all that is highest and purest in our moral experience, and is indeed fundamental in the Christian consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the treatment of the problem of evil in Dr. Martineau's *Study of Religion* ; and his endeavour to determine the place of God's providential action, in the earlier part of his *Seat of Authority in Religion*. The Gifford

Finally, God is the receiver of prayer. Prayer lies so close to the roots of the religious life that it appears under every variety of theistic belief ; and yet there is perhaps no subject of which it is more difficult to frame a doctrine satisfying to the intellect. The fundamental fact on which the practice of prayer must rest is the reality of communion between the soul and God. This has its source in the self-communicating love of God, and is implied throughout the whole range of religious experience, if it has attained the Christian level. Without this, religion can be nothing more than a devout acknowledgment and admiration of the perfect attributes of a cold and distant Deity ; but Christianity recognizes a secret life of the soul, which is accepted as the indwelling of the eternal life of God, and which may be described by saying of him who surrenders himself to it, ' God abides in him, and he in God.' As soon as this communion is consciously embraced there is prayer, so that in its widest sense prayer may be defined as the conscious and intentional communion with God on the part of man. It may exist, without the limitation of words, in the silent aspiration to lose the life of self in the life of God, and to receive from his fulness whatever treasures of the Spirit he may be willing to bestow.

Coming, however, to ordinary usage, and regarding

Lectures, 1897, by Dr. A. B. Bruce, on *The Providential Order of the World*, may be consulted with advantage. The problem is treated from the idealist point of view in the concluding lecture of Professor Josiah Royce's *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, 1892. *Evil : Physical and Moral*, 1887, is a thoughtful little book by the Rev. G. St. Clair. There is also an interesting section in Professor Wendt's *System der christlichen Lehre*, 1906. A good summary and criticism of the treatment of this question in modern German speculation may be seen in *Die Lehre vom Übel in den grossen Systemen der nachkantischen Philosophie und Theologie*, by Otto Willareth, 1903. There are interesting remarks on ' the Divine office of pain ' in the development of the human mind in Auguste Sabatier's *Esquisse d'une Philosophie de la Religion d'après la Psychologie et l'Histoire*, 1897. pp. 15 sqq.



prayer as a form of words addressed to the heavenly Father, we may divide it into thanksgiving, confession, and petition. The two former are attended by no theoretical difficulty, and their propriety follows from the doctrine which we have reached respecting the love and holiness of God. That love is the source of all the blessings we enjoy, and he in whose heart it is a felt reality must be always grateful, and the praise, from whose presence murmuring and discontent withdraw abashed, must often break spontaneously from his lips. And, again, God is the fountain of that moral law against which we have all offended, and through confession we seek to renew the broken threads of communion, and to lay aside that proud and self-righteous spirit which separates us from the Divine holiness. But when we come to petition, the question at once arises whether it is possible, and, if possible, desirable, that we, with our short-sighted requests, should influence the Divine purpose, and alter the pre-ordained sequence of events. The difficulties arising out of this question require careful consideration.

To the question put in its most general form the answer appears to be simple. There can be no doubt that the presence of man introduces a wholly new condition into the order of nature. I say new, for whatever germs of human reason and will may be traced among the lower animals, or however gradually the distinctive human nature may have been evolved, the great products of civilization, literature, art, science, and a multitude of mechanical inventions, exist only in the society of men, and are dependent on the co-operation of the human will. Whatever view may be taken of the freedom of the will, it remains true that if men did not choose to produce these things they would not be produced ; and accordingly we may argue that, if God has left certain things dependent on the action of the human will, he may also have left certain things dependent on human petition. We may further plead that, if the effectiveness of reason and will cannot be denied, though they often fail to

accomplish the desired result, petition may be often disappointed, and yet be a real power in determining the course of events. It may be said, however, that, though in the abstract this is true, nevertheless there is this marked difference between the two cases, that, whereas we have daily experience of the productive activity of reason and will, we have no proof whatever that petition does really introduce any change into the order of affairs otherwise established. A good many years ago a proposal was made to bring this question to an experimental test. If two hospitals were selected, and in one prayer was continually made for the recovery of the patients, while in the other no such prayer was offered, would there be a larger percentage of recovery in the former than in the latter? To this proposal two answers may fairly be made. The first is that it would be impossible to fulfil the just conditions of the experiment. The mere formal uttering or not uttering of certain words, which is all that could be agreed upon, would not in the smallest degree answer to the distinction between prayer and no prayer. The difference lies in the entire spiritual constitution. In the one hospital, doctors, nurses, and patients must be religious and prayerful people; in the other they must be wholly destitute of belief in prayer, and I think we ought to add that, in order to avoid the possible effect of heredity or education, their ancestors must have been equally destitute. Given this distinction, the skill, the knowledge, the appliances, the diseases ought to be on a par. These conditions it is beyond our power to secure; but if they could be secured, it is by no means clear that the percentage of recovery would not be much higher in the religious than in the irreligious hospital. But secondly, spiritual men shrink from such an experiment, not because they doubt the value of prayer, but because they instinctively feel that the method is not applicable, for prayer is not one of the natural forces which, like heat and electricity, can have its limits precisely determined by experimental methods.



Rather is it incalculable, like the workings of genius. If genius is dependent on the constitution of the brain, I suppose that a scientific man who was absolutely competent could have predicted and written down the Iliad or Hamlet, not from the gifts of his own imagination, but by following the series of physical changes till he knew the actual motion of the pen which would trace the successive words. But if not the slightest approach has been made to any such power of prediction, why are we to assume that the power and range of prayer, the results of which may be accomplished by a thousand subtle workings in the depths of the soul, must be open to our scrutiny, and allow its mechanical or physical equivalent to be set down in an algebraical formula ?<sup>1</sup>

But though such considerations may suffice to set aside the general objection to prayer, it does not remove all the difficulties. Wide and incalculable as is the power entrusted to the human mind, it nevertheless has some well-defined limits. It cannot alter the laws of nature, but only use and combine natural processes for the accomplishment of fresh designs, and even here the operations of men are, relatively to the universal order, on the minutest scale. Over the great cosmic phenomena, such as the movements of the stars, the earthquake, the height of the tidal wave, man has no control. Can we then reasonably suppose that in things which seem to be placed absolutely beyond the direction of human power prayer may intervene, and obtain from God that which man's laborious cleverness has failed to effect ? I know indeed that piety has often answered this question in the affirmative, and spoken as though prayer were a mode of enlisting Divine omnipotence on the side of human desire ; but even an unreasoning piety stops short at the point where the laws of nature are fully known. Who would pray that the sun should not rise to-morrow, or that

<sup>1</sup> The statistical argument is examined with care and impartiality by J. H. Jellett in *The Efficacy of Prayer : being the Donnellan Lectures for the year 1877*.



it should be eclipsed at the time of full moon? But those who believe that the reign of law extends throughout the physical universe must apply this rule everywhere, and admit that prayer has no place where the intervention of human agency is excluded. This rule seems applicable to the oft-debated question of prayers for rain. Jellett indeed correctly points out that the general rainfall of a country is partly dependent upon human agency, such as the cutting down of forests and the draining of swamps.<sup>1</sup> But this remark is not applicable to prayers for rain, which are offered precisely at the times when human agency is at fault, and because it is at fault. The object of the prayer is to bring about an immediate change in the established sequence of phenomena through an exercise of Divine volition induced by the prayer. To a theist the question, in this case, is not whether God *can* thus interpose to change the order of events, but whether he *will*. To the temper of mind which is both religious and scientific it has become increasingly difficult to believe that God ever departs from his own steadfast ways in the physical world simply because men ask him to do so. If he did, and if prayer were efficacious throughout the whole range of phenomena, science would be at an end, and the influence of human caprice would be stamped upon the universe even in those regions where human power and intelligence can have no influence.

This conclusion is not opposed to the teaching of Christ, although he approaches the question solely from the religious side. He teaches us to trust in God for the supply of our wants, but urges that for that very reason our prayers should be short and simple, for our Father knows what we have need of before we ask him. Prayers, therefore, for the supply of our needs are, generally speaking, conformed to the Divine order, and are rather an acknowledgment of our dependence upon God than an attempt to influence his will. The only physical blessing for which Christ teaches us to pray is our

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 152 sqq.



daily bread ; and this is not supplied apart from human industry. We cannot suppose that, if men did nothing but sit still and pray, loaves would spontaneously present themselves on their tables ; for even the birds, which the heavenly Father feeds, must fly down to pick up their food. I think, then, we may lay down this rule, that prayer for physical blessings is legitimate only where the contingency of human action comes in. Where the will of God is known it would be impious to pray against it, and it would seem unmeaning to pray for its fulfilment ; but where there is contingency we may turn our wishes into prayers, provided always that they be offered in humble submission to the Divine will, so that, whether they be granted or refused, they may be sanctified and cleared from every selfish element.

It may be said that this rule would put an unnatural restraint upon religious emotion, and that it is not consistent with piety to make this fine distinction among our desires, and, while we convert some into prayers, to keep others outside the realm of our devotion. We may reply that, if prayer be understood in its larger sense, and not limited to mere petition, the view which we have taken does not forbid us to follow the apostolic precept, ‘In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.’ All our desires should be hallowed by being turned into prayer, in the sense of laying them solemnly before God in our communion with him. But they must be thus offered, not as though God’s will could be bent to ours, but in order that ours may be brought into conformity with his, and that our foolish and short-sighted wishes may die down in the presence of his wise and vast designs. Accordingly the Apostle does not say that our requests will be granted, but that the peace of God will keep our hearts and minds. The blessing which is bestowed on prayer often consists, not in the gratification of our wild cravings, but in subduing them into a sweet acquiescence in the Divine will.

In prayer for spiritual blessings we are no longer beset by the same difficulty ; for in praying for these we are praying in detail for nearer communion with God, and this we believe to be not only in strict accordance with his holiness and love, but to be conditioned by prayer. This truth is confirmed by the experience of saintly men. It is in prayer that they find God, and are found of him. It is by prayer that their spiritual life is nourished, and they are made worthy of their place in the Divine kingdom. For each man the ultimate proof of this must be in his own experience, his own realization of that drawing of the Spirit which leads him into prayer, his own consciousness of entering into a higher communion, where earthly passion is subdued, where visions and revelations of the Lord present themselves to the quickened spiritual sense, and a heavenly peace falls upon the waiting heart.

But even here an objection is raised to which we must give a moment's attention. The spiritual effects of prayer are not denied ; but then, it is said, these are only the reaction of the mind upon itself, and thus the chill of doubt is introduced into the holiest activity of the soul. To the believer in God, however, this objection is without meaning. You can always describe events from the two points of view of natural law and of Divine providence. To the denier of God these represent two contrasted hypotheses ; but to the believer they are only two modes of describing the same ultimate reality. If it be a natural law that prayer is followed by a certain mental reaction, this does not exclude the agency of God, but may be expressed religiously by saying that God invariably answers prayer in a certain way. We may make the constant faithfulness of God a reason for denying his presence in the universe ; but we may also regard the majesty of universal law as a manifestation of eternal Reason, and exclaim with Paul, 'Of him, and through him, and to him are all things ; to him be glory for ever.'



### PART III

## DOCTRINE OF MAN

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WE must now enter on another main division of our subject, which is usually denoted by the term 'Anthropology.' Anthropology in its widest sense is a science of very extensive range ; and, although researches in this department of inquiry throw an interesting light on the history of religion and on the origin of religious belief, we must here limit our attention to the ideal and actual relations between God and man, straying into other fields only so far as they may affect our decision in regard to the central topic.

The subject with which we concluded our last section at once suggests to us the ideal condition of man. It is that of perfect communion with God, a communion in which he is not only absolutely obedient to the Divine Will, but filled and governed by the Divine Spirit. It is this communion that constitutes him a son of God, and we may briefly describe man's ideal end as Divine Sonship. It is not necessary to prove at any length that this forms a dominant note in the Christian Scriptures. The truth has its deepest foundations in the consciousness of Jesus himself, who gives distinct individual realization to a thought which was held more vaguely and generally by the greatest prophets of Israel ; and it is taken up and repeated by the disciples. 'The earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God' ;<sup>1</sup> 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 19.

these are sons of God ' ;<sup>1</sup> ' Every one who loves has been born of God.'<sup>2</sup> These wonderful utterances find their confirmation in the experiences of faith, which reveal an ideal always above and beyond us, and yet dwelling within us as the spring of progress and the hope of ultimate beatitude, and making us so conscious of the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts as to convince us that, but for some obstruction in ourselves, we should be pure organs of the Divine will, and with the unveiled faces of sons of God reflect, as a pure mirror, the Divine glory.

We might be content to rest in this great spiritual fact ; but it is necessary to notice one of those insoluble questions which have so often engaged the interest of theologians. In former times it was usually, though not universally, assumed that the narrative in the opening chapters of Genesis was literal history, and gave an unerring account of the origin and primitive constitution of man, and of the beginning of sin and death. An elaborate theory was founded on the statement that God created man in his own image and likeness,<sup>3</sup> a careful distinction in meaning being sometimes drawn between the two principal Hebrew words. A description of the various shades of interpretation applied to the Biblical language belongs to the history of opinion rather than to our present subject ; and it must be sufficient to state that in the course of time the opinion prevailed that man's likeness to God consisted in the possession of reason and free will and authority over the other occupants of the world. This, however, was not all. Man was endowed by the Creator with ' original righteousness,'<sup>4</sup> or, as the Westminster Confession has it, ' with knowledge, righteousness,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> I John iv. 7. The Greek is even more significant, *πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται.*

<sup>3</sup> Gen. i. 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Originalis justitia* : ' *sanctitatem et justitiam, in qua constitutus fuerat.*' Conc. Trid., Sessio v. § 1.



and true holiness, after his own image.'<sup>1</sup> On this point a curious difference arose between Catholics and Protestants. The former believed that the *pura naturalia* with which man was created did not include, on the ethical side, more than the faculty of moral action, and that his original righteousness was a supernatural and superadded gift of grace ; the latter, on the contrary, maintained that wisdom and righteousness were included in the act of creation, so that by his own native strength man could love God supremely and execute his commands, and might have transmitted this exalted nature to his posterity.<sup>2</sup> Immortality, whether as part of man's natural constitution or as a subsequent gift, is generally included in the idea of the image of God.

This doctrine is largely based on a very natural assumption. It seems to be almost a dictate of piety to believe that whatever was created immediately by God must have been perfect in all its parts, and represented fully the idea which it was intended to enshrine. But we have been compelled by facts to recognize a different order, and to see the finished embodiment of the Divine thought slowly evolved from rudimentary beginnings. And it is interesting to observe how little support the Bible gives to the doctrine of the theologians. In the story, or the combined stories, in Genesis no ethical ideal is attached to the 'image of God' ; and Adam and Eve are represented as living in naked innocence, and with no knowledge of good and evil. The acquisition of this fatal knowledge constitutes their fall ; and so far are they from being immortal that they are turned out of paradise lest they should become so by eating of the tree of life. If we met the unfallen Adam as he appears in the Bible, we should take him for a savage, though possibly an intelligent and harmless one. This view is not altered by the two passages

<sup>1</sup> iv. 2.

<sup>2</sup> See the citations in Winer's *Comparative Darstellung des Lehrbegriffs*. Wendt points out that this distinction indicates a different conception of what is essential to the true ideal of man : *Syst. d. chr. Lehre*, pp. 163 sq.

in which Paul dwells upon the subject. In Romans<sup>1</sup> he betrays no knowledge of Adam except that he was disobedient and so brought sin and death into the world. In I Corinthians<sup>2</sup> the first man is of the earth, earthy, a mere psychical being, in contrast to the spiritual. It may surprise us that this representation agrees so closely, in the essential point, with the results of modern research. For all who prefer knowledge to superstition the tale of Adam and Eve has vanished from history. Human civilization is far older than the first man of the Bible, and the traces of human activity reach back into a still dimmer distance. Of the primitive man we know nothing. If our bodily constitution was evolved from that of some anthropoid ape, we know not when or how the creature ceased to be ape, and began to be man. These are questions for biologists, and not for theologians. We must judge of man by our experience of men, and acknowledge the grand spiritual facts of his nature, whatever may be the date or the method of their origin. Through the ages the distinctive human faculties have been rising into greater clearness and power, and we must form our conception of the Divine ideal of humanity from that which is deepest and purest in our own consciousness, when illuminated by the radiant thought of those who can be truly described as 'the light of the world.'

Now when we come to deal with actual men, and examine the contents of the Christian consciousness, we find not only a recognition of their Divine sonship, but, united with this, a perception that the ideal of sonship is always above and beyond them, and that they have neither been perfectly obedient to the Divine Will nor wholly governed in their inward life by the Divine Spirit; and when we take a more extended survey, we find that, even where the ideal has been lower than that presented by Christianity, still there has been a sense of coming short of some Divine requirement, or, if we turn to men of a baser type, we observe that

<sup>1</sup> v. 12 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> xv. 45 sqq.



their lives are far beneath the ethical demands of the more advanced religions. We are therefore justified in generalizing the Christian sense of unworthiness, and saying with Paul that 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.'<sup>1</sup> Thus we are introduced to the problem of sin; and we have to inquire into the nature of sin, its source, and the occasion of its manifestations.

Sin has been defined as a transgression of the divinely enacted moral law; and in defence of this definition appeal is made to I John iii. 4, 'Sin is lawlessness.'<sup>2</sup> To this definition it is possible to give a wide and deep interpretation; but it most readily suggests a limitation to conduct, or the decisions of the will in acting or refusing to act, producing sins of commission and of omission. With this limitation, sin, distinguished as overt or actual, stands in the same relation to the Divine order as crime bears to human enactments, and must be estimated altogether from the legal point of view; and though this aspect of the question is far from exhausting our ethical problem, it introduces us to the vast field of moral obligation, where we encounter the sense of desert and guilt, or of merit and demerit. It is necessary, therefore, to survey the conditions which are implied in the judgments of approval and disapproval with which we regard merit and demerit respectively.

The idea of merit in general appears to arise upon the attainment of, or the endeavour to attain, a given end by the fulfilment of understood conditions. For instance, when a competitive examination is held we speak of the successful candidate as *deserving* the prize which is offered for competition. In this case the end proposed is a certain standard of excellence in the answers; the condition is the preparation of appointed subjects; and the examination is the means by which the fulfilment of the condition and the attainment of the end are tested. Could it be shown that the successful candidate had not fulfilled the condition, but owed his success

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ἡ ἀμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία.



to the accidents of an ill-conducted examination, or that he had pursued his studies, not from his own choice, but under terror of the lash, our belief in his merit would disappear. On the other hand, the answering of an unsuccessful candidate may be considered meritorious, if he has made the best use of his abilities and opportunities in an endeavour to attain the desired end. Again, when we say that one picture has far higher merit than another, we have a tacit reference to the artists ; for, strictly speaking, pictures can be only the signs of merit. In this case artistic excellence is the end, and the condition is the employment of the means by which that excellence is attained. Did it appear that the better picture had resulted from the random flourishes of a monkey, we should still wonder at its excellence, but think no more of its merit.

So in the world of morals there is an end to be attained or sought, and there are conditions to be fulfilled, before the idea of moral desert arises in the mind.

1. The end is right actions. Here the expression 'right actions' is to be understood as denoting such actions as in the general experience of mankind arise from the best motives, and have therefore come to be classified as right, and to be looked upon as required by the Divine law. When we see a noble action, we usually assume the existence of the needed conditions, and regard the agent as meritorious ; when we behold a base action, we visit the agent with our disapproval. If there be absolutely no action or attempt at action, the conception of merit or demerit does not arise. But it must be noticed that the word action is sometimes used in the negative sense of abstinence from action. Thus we say that a man acted very badly in not pursuing some particular line of conduct. This language, no doubt, has its origin in the fact that he did something else instead ; but what he did may be in itself indifferent, and the whole moral significance of his conduct is connected with what he *omitted* to do. So also we admire the conduct of a man who



simply sits still and silent under a storm of abuse ; and in this instance his abstinence from violence or invective, not his sitting still, is what calls forth our approval. In such cases omission to act possesses the essential qualities of action ; for it involves a choice between two courses, a positive and a negative. In the latter there may really be action in the deepest sense ; for the will may strenuously exert itself to repress the natural outburst of anger. Again, not only must there be actions, but the actions must be right or wrong ; for actions which are morally indifferent, though they may excite admiration or dislike, fail to touch the springs of moral approval or disapproval.

2. The following are the conditions, the fulfilment of which is implied in our judgments of merit and demerit.

(a) The action must be intentional. If a wrong has been committed, we feel that want of intention, if adequately proved, completely exculpates the apparent criminal ; and we readily condone an offence which is accidental. On the other hand, if a man bestow a magnificent donation on a hospital, and we then discover that he did so through a mistake, and intended out of his abundance to contribute only a widow's mite, our admiring approval will disappear. It may also be remarked that the intention is often taken as the equivalent of the deed ; and if performance be hindered only by some inevitable obstruction, there is no diminution in our sense of the agent's merit or demerit. In such cases all the essential elements of action are present, and only the mechanical movement which completes it is frustrated. These remarks may be sufficient to indicate how essential to our conviction of moral desert is the intention of the agent.

(b) The agent must have knowledge of a better and a worse. Without such knowledge actions, however they may be classified in the moral code, are simply innocent. ' They know not what they do ' is a plea which, when fully established, obliterates guilt. We attribute neither merit nor demerit to infants, to idiots, or to brutes, because they have

no knowledge of good and evil ; and whenever we bestow our approval we invariably assume that the agent is familiar with moral distinctions.

(c) The agent does not deserve our approval unless he acts from the best motive present in his mind, or our disapproval unless he acts from one lower than his best. If a good action has been performed, our sense of the agent's merit is totally destroyed if we are satisfied that he acted from a latent selfishness, or with calculating hypocrisy was seeking to gain credit for acting on a higher motive than that which really prompted him. We cease to believe in the merit of the Pharisee's almsgiving the moment we hear his trumpet. So, again, we admit that a criminal is an object rather for pity than for anger, if it is certain that, owing to some delusion he acted under a high and noble motive ; and though in such a case it may be necessary for society to defend itself by the infliction of punishment, that punishment ought to be restricted to the requirements of self-protection, and is not deserved in the same ethical sense as the penalty imposed upon a man who sets all his higher motives at defiance, and gives way to his brutal passions. The restraint which is exercised is rather akin to that which is found needful for lunatics, and ought not in strictness to be denominated punishment.

(d) That there may be merit there must be some degree of difficulty in the action. In the case of a right action the sense of merit is in the direct ratio of this difficulty ; in the case of a wrong action the sense of demerit is in the inverse ratio of the difficulty of acting right. If a right action be perfectly spontaneous, and attended by no conflict of motives, our sense of merit is not touched. It would be flagrantly wrong in us to starve ourselves to death ; yet we have not the smallest merit in eating. We perform our usual round of duties without much merit because it is generally easy to us ; but if headache or fatigue renders it difficult, or if we have to relinquish some great pleasure in order to be at our post,



then we rise in the scale of merit. And if a very arduous duty be unexpectedly imposed upon us, if we are called upon to forfeit life or reputation, then in choosing the right course we deserve the highest approval; and accordingly, while men earn nothing but the courtesy of thanks by paying their bills, the names of those who have dared to die for truth and righteousness are treasured with profoundest love. On the other hand, we visit with our severest disapproval the men who do wrong under an insignificant temptation, while we look mercifully upon him to whom virtue is a weary struggle, and who is sometimes borne down in the vehemence of the strife. If the difficulty of acting right became infinite, the agent would be helpless, and no demerit would attach to him; and if the difficulty became evanescent, the guilt would become immeasurable, and the wrongdoer deserve the loathing which we accord to fiends.

(e) There must be liberty of choice between conflicting motives. The difficult subject of free will must be left to philosophical treatises. Here I would only state the fact that, if men's wills were governed by some internal machinery, ruling their choice by a law as inflexible as that which determines the direction of a ball impelled by two forces, so that they were no more truly the causes of their own actions than a ball which communicates its own motion to another is the cause of that motion, then we should ascribe to them neither merit nor demerit, and should as soon think of bestowing our moral approval upon the waving of a tree as upon the integrity of a merchant or the submission of a martyr. In order to prevent a confusion into which one easily falls in speaking of the freedom of the will, the liberty of choice which has just been referred to is described as *formal* or *natural*, and is thus distinguished from the *libertas realis*, in which a man is complete master of his impulses, and follows without struggle the dictates of virtue. It is to the latter freedom that Christ alludes when he says 'The truth shall make you free. . . . Every one who commits sin

is the slave of sin. . . . If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be really free.’<sup>1</sup>

The foregoing review of the conditions under which merit and demerit arise will enable us to understand the distinction which has been drawn between the *material* and the *formal* in actions; the material denoting simply the external fact itself, which, if it were an automatic set of movements, would have no ethical colour; the formal referring to the relation towards it of the mind and will, which imparts to it its moral quality.

Such, then, is the nature of actual sin or wrongdoing, and such are the rules by which it is measured. Although, as we shall see, there is another aspect of sin, this legal view is clearly presented in the New Testament. No one can read the Gospels without perceiving how strongly it is enforced by Christ, with what generous trust he appeals to the natural judgment of right and wrong and to the capabilities of the will, and how fully he recognizes different degrees of merit and demerit, to be followed by appropriate rewards and punishments. Paul is the one writer from whose teaching it is sometimes supposed to be absent; but he is as emphatic on this point as any other Apostle. ‘God will render to every man according to his works’;<sup>2</sup> ‘Each man shall receive the things done in the body, according to what he practised, whether good or bad’;<sup>3</sup> ‘Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.’<sup>4</sup> In accordance with such judgments we must say that in the Christian view human merit and demerit, as perceived by the conscience, are real, and are recognized in the judgment of God; and although it is true that all have sinned, nevertheless in the court of eternal justice the martyr of righteousness is accepted as possessing a degree of merit which does not belong to the footpad or the rake. But this does not imply that men can earn

<sup>1</sup> Ὁντως ἐλεύθεροι. John viii. 32, 34, 36.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. ii. 6, elaborated in the following verses.

<sup>3</sup> II Cor. v. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. vi. 7.



equivalents of pleasure in return for their good actions, as though they had conferred a favour upon God by obeying his commandments. The claims of the moral law are absolute, and not a matter of bargain between us and God; and the duty of obedience would remain the same if no reward ever followed. When we have done all that is required of us, we are still 'unprofitable servants'; for though we may exceed the requirements of a human law, and so have good ground for boasting before men, we can have no such ground towards God, for in relation to him it is impossible to exceed our duty, because the highest intimation of his Spirit within us immediately constitutes a duty. Eternal life, therefore, remains in the completest sense the gift of God: and yet that gift may be offered conditionally, and made to depend in part on human merit and demerit, and so, in one aspect, be regarded as the reward of righteousness.

But now we must ask, does the above account exhaust the moral problem, and would a man be morally perfect if he did nothing that he ought not, and omitted nothing that he ought to do, or, in other words, does sin consist solely of voluntary breaches of a known moral law? This question has frequently received an affirmative reply. Thus, for instance, Mr. F. R. Tennant, in his very thoughtful work on *The Origin and Propagation of Sin* (the Hulsean Lectures for 1901-1902), says that 'The "seat of sin" is the will alone,' that a sin 'is an activity of the will, expressed in thought, word, or deed, contrary to the individual's conscience,'<sup>1</sup> and that 'our impulses and passions can therefore no more be called "sinful," in the strict sense, than alcohol or dynamite.'<sup>2</sup> The latter comparison shows that we are dealing with a real difference of thought, and not merely with the application of a term. Wendt maintains the same view,<sup>3</sup> and alleges that 'all natural impulses are in themselves morally indifferent,' though they may all, the spiritual as

<sup>1</sup> p. 160.<sup>2</sup> p. 164.<sup>3</sup> *System d. chr. Lehre*, pp. 211 sqq.

well as the physical, become temptations to sin.<sup>1</sup> But, if we look deeply into our own minds, I think we shall find it difficult to be satisfied with this answer to our question. Guilt, as we have seen, is confined within the domain of the will ; and accordingly sin, in the sense of wrongdoing, is not imputed where there is no law which we voluntarily disobey. But the word sin is applied in theology to the inward sources of moral transgression, to the perversion of our nature from its ideal end, the estrangement of our interior life from the eternal life of God. And surely this extension of the term is rightly made ; for no one who has entered into the mind of Christ can look upon his own inward corruption as other than moral evil. Envy, covetousness, irascibility, vindictiveness, arrogance, malice, even if we can conceive them so effectually curbed by the will as not to display themselves in overt acts, are not felt as a mere imperfection or ugliness, but as a spirit adverse to the Spirit of God. Towards mere defects in our natural gifts we feel that we ought to be resigned, accepting them with humble submission as from the hands of God ; but these ingredients of character we feel bound to resist, and, if possible, destroy, as in themselves bad, and actively opposed to the Divine will. As Christ so plainly puts it, it is out of the heart that proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, murders, thefts, and the other sins that defile mankind, so that we must go behind the will to find the source of that immoral tendency which results in breaches of the law of God. If we yield to these evil impulses with acquiescent will, we become bad men, and fall under just condemnation. If we resist them, we may perhaps succeed in repressing their manifestation in acts of wickedness, and then we are men of duty, respected and trusted by others ; but so long as they assert their power within us, life is a stern struggle, and we are far from the inward holiness and peace of the children of God. But this possible victory of the will may be no more than a hypothetical case ; and it is at all

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 227.



events far more common for the will to smart under a sense of defeat. Men of ardent temperament can fully sympathize with the experience of Paul—‘ The will is present with me, but not the accomplishment of that which is good ’ ;<sup>1</sup> and it sometimes seems as though a demonic power were asserting its supremacy within them, so that they are tempted to abandon the moral struggle in despair. From such an experience comes the theory of the enslaved will, where freedom of choice remains, but the executive power is wanting, so that the will can be liberated only by a radical change in the nature of the underlying impulses. To faith and love all things may be possible ; but so long as we hate we cannot act lovingly, and we cannot believe and love by simply willing to do so. This experience, however, is not always so vivid as to impress itself on the consciousness ; and, if we are to judge from observation, and from the different views which men have taken, there are great varieties of temperament which easily lend themselves to opposite interpretations. Some men, either from the original gift of a wholesome nature or from early influence and training, exercise an easy self-command, and know neither the rapture nor the depression of men more sensitively constituted. The calmness of a sedate Pelagius cannot understand the storms of a passionate Augustine. And yet the more passionate nature, in which spiritual experience presents itself in exaggerated forms, may have the truer insight into the facts ; and probably few men who examine themselves with candour would deny that they have impulses which, if followed, would lead them to do wrong ; that these are not always easily resisted, and that they have in many instances resulted in wrongdoing ; that they are inconsistent with the ideal life of children of God ; and that they cannot be destroyed, and superseded by saintly desires, through a mere exercise of will. This opposition, then, in our nature to the holy requirements of the Divine Spirit, however various are

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 18.

its degrees, may be regarded as a general human fact ; and it answers to what is known in ecclesiastical theology as original sin.

It may be thought inappropriate to apply the same word sin, to two series of facts which are so entirely unlike ; and some, as we have already observed, would restrict the term to deliberate breaches of the moral law. But there are some reasons by which the more extended use of the term may be justified. First, the general confession of sinfulness would become a mere pretence, if sin were entirely an affair of the will ; for I believe that there are numbers of men who would not, and in fact do not, with cold deliberation set their wills against what they believe to be the Divine will. From this point of view they are sinless ; and yet it is precisely such men that have the deepest consciousness of sin. Paul, almost in the same breath, exculpates himself, and in his despair cries for redemption : ‘ It is no longer I that do it, but the sin which dwells in me. . . . Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me ? ’<sup>1</sup> Secondly, it is convenient to have a single word by which the whole field of moral evil may be referred to ; and we have several distinct words, transgression, disobedience, guilt, by which to describe the unrighteous action of the will. Thirdly, without these evil impulses we should not even think of violating the law. If I were not angry, I should not strike a cruel blow. If I were not covetous, I should not steal. If I were not revengeful, I should not murder my enemy. Faithlessness of will alone does not explain Turkish atrocities, or the hideous sports of the Roman amphitheatre, or the brutality of the slave-driver, or the fiendish excesses of the Inquisition. Accordingly wicked acts, for which we are justly held responsible, seem to be only manifestations of a principle of sin which is deeply planted in our nature, and to which the bad ethical quality of our acts is due.

But I think we may go further, and maintain that, if

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 17, 24.



we inquire into the ultimate nature of moral evil, we shall find the same characteristic pervading our breaches of the moral law and the vehemence of unrighteous passion. Many theologians have sought for the essence of sin in the dominance of the sensual nature. Paul's doctrine of the flesh has been thought to lend support to this view, and to sanction a dualistic position in which the spirit and the flesh are intrinsically opposed to one another. This is not the place to enter on an exegesis of Paul's teaching, especially as it seems certain that the earliest Christian sentiment did not regard the flesh as in its own nature evil. The great doctrine that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh was directly opposed to any such idea. Nevertheless the flesh afforded sin its opportunity, and became the organ through which it produced its most baleful effects. And such is actually the case. The flesh is the lower nature, which ought to be under the dominion of the spirit; and when it assumes the mastery and determines the direction of our lives, it leads us into sin. Yet this is not because its natural appetencies are bad, but because, being appointed for service, they have assumed the lordship. Every function with which God has endowed our bodies has its proper and necessary place, and is therefore essentially good; but we may use it for a wrong end, and so make it an occasion for sin. This is undoubtedly a fruitful source of wrongdoing; but we cannot justly say either that the sin resides in the sensual pleasure considered simply in itself, or that all transgressions are marked by a sensual taint. It is indeed remarkable that Jesus, from the point of view of his own unblemished purity, passed far more severe condemnation on spiritual sin, the arrogance and hypocrisy of self-righteousness, than on sin which was openly and frankly sensual; and he did so, not as condoning the latter, but because it was often more external, and had eaten less deeply into the character, than the former.

Many thinkers, therefore, have had recourse to self-seeking



as the principle of sin ;<sup>1</sup> and this view appears much more tenable than that which we have rejected. For if we examine either of the two classes of moral evil which we have recognized as sin, we shall find that this is their common characteristic. If I make a wrong choice, and either do that which I ought not or fail to do that which I ought, it is because I prefer my own pleasure or advantage or comfort to the execution of demands which are justly made upon me. So far as that particular line of conduct is concerned, it is a living for self rather than for God, and so has its root in self-love or self-absorption. Our evil passions derive their virulence from the same source. Why are we moved with violent and vindictive anger ? It is because our wounded self-love enormously exaggerates the wrong which has been committed ; for if we judged the case impartially, as between two unknown men, our indignation would be confined within just and reasonable limits. Why do we envy the prosperity of others ? Because we should like to appropriate it to ourselves. Why are we covetous ? Because our thoughts are so wrapt up in self that we wish to secure for ourselves whatever is pleasurable without regard to the loss or pain of others. Why are we malicious ? Partly because self-love has deadened our sympathies, partly because it cannot brook a rival, and so we like to crush every one who could prick it with a sense of inferiority. Why do we murmur in our hearts against providence ? Because we would put ourselves in the place of God, and rule the universe for our particular interests. Thus the essence of sin is the precise antithesis of the ideal end of our being. It is a devotion to self, instead of a losing of self in communion with God. Hence, whether manifested in overt acts of transgression or hidden in the secret wishes of the heart, it is enmity against God, an assertion of our will against his, or a repugnance to the universal life of the Holy Spirit. And so in considering the nature of sin and righteous-

<sup>1</sup> Among others Thomas Aquinas regards self-love as the principle or cause of all sin. *Summa theo.*, II. i. Qu. 77, Art. 4.



ness we have passed far beyond what is ordinarily known as law, and instead of confining our attention to conduct, properly so called, we have met with two antagonistic principles, which work in the deepest recesses of the soul, and may be briefly described as the life of self and the life of God.

Another point requires attention. In the representation which I have given sin appears as a positive evil. The fact that this greatly aggravates the difficulty presented by the problem of evil has induced many thinkers to deny it, and to maintain that evil is purely negative, a privation of being, an imperfection which necessarily characterizes one who is created. Among others, Leibniz, professedly following Augustine, strenuously maintains this position, and quotes with approbation the ancient sayings, 'bonum ex causa integra, malum ex quolibet defectu,' and 'malum causam habet non efficientem, sed deficientem.'<sup>1</sup> Julius Müller, however, points out that Augustine commonly speaks of 'privation' in an active sense, and not in the passive meaning defended by Leibniz. It is in his view an activity which tends to the diminution of being,<sup>2</sup> and its presence can be explained only from the freedom of the will.<sup>3</sup> Before Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa represented moral evil<sup>4</sup> as having no existence of its own, being only the absence of virtue,<sup>5</sup> just as blindness is only the absence of sight.<sup>6</sup> It was a common idea in ancient times. Plotinus declares that evil is a defect of good.<sup>7</sup> In our own day, Dr. F. H. Hedge, in his thoughtful work, *Reason in Religion*, maintains this position in regard to sin, though he admits that 'the results of this negation, the effects of sin, are damnably positive.'<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Théodicée, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> *Malum tendit ad non esse.*

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Grimm, *Instit.*, p. 298, note 7.

<sup>4</sup> Κακία.

<sup>5</sup> Ἀρετῆς ἀπουσία.

<sup>6</sup> *Cat. Orat.* 5-7.

<sup>7</sup> Ὅλως δὲ τὸ κακὸν ἔλλειψιν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ θετέον. *Ennead.* III. ii. 5. Referred to by J. H. Strawley, *The Catechetical Oration of Gregory of Nyssa*. 1903, p. 27, note 10, where other authors are quoted.

<sup>8</sup> pp. 133 sqq.

This view seems to me to be an attempt to get rid of a difficulty by denying its reality, and I cannot persuade myself that it is true. It certainly is false in regard to pain, as we may convince ourselves by our constant experience. Our bodily organs for the most part do not affect our consciousness, and when they are in pain, we feel that they are in a state widely different from the normal absence of pleasurable sensations. Pain, therefore, is not a defect of pleasure, but its opposite. A similar remark holds good of moral evil. The anger which impels me to kill is not a feeble kind of love, which, if augmented, would induce me to forgive and bless, but is the antagonist of love, a very positive force driving me in the wrong direction. In the same way a wilful act of wrong is not a feeble execution of right. When I rob my neighbour, I do not imperfectly fulfil the law of God, but break and defy it. We may also observe that our moral judgments, instead of becoming more severe with the increase of deficiency, become more lenient. A child is more defective than a man, and for this reason we more readily condone his faults, and we might, for the same act, acquit a child as innocent and condemn a man as guilty; and when we reach the degree of deficiency that belongs to the beasts we cease to look for moral distinctions at all. I think, therefore, whatever difficulties such a conclusion may involve, we must acquiesce in the position that sin is a positive evil.

One question still remains under this head. Are we to infer from the universality of sin that it is, strictly speaking, a human attribute, belonging, like intelligence and volition, to the essence of man? Our whole exposition shows that we must answer in the negative. Sin, although upon our earth it characterizes man alone, nevertheless makes him, not more, but less human; for it is diametrically opposed to the Divine ideal of man. If it belonged to our essence, every increase in it would add to the richness and fulness of our nature, just as we rise in the scale of being with the enlargement



of our intelligence or the improvement of our æsthetic tastes. But so far is this from being the case that we spontaneously describe a wicked and cruel man as a brute, meaning that to the extent of his wickedness he has cast off his humanity ; and experience teaches us that sin tends to destroy the finest human characteristics, and that in proportion as sin is overcome every part of our nature is lifted to a higher level, and we attain to a larger and more perfect manhood. Sin, therefore, in spite of its universal prevalence, is something foreign to our nature, a disease which tends to deaden our humanity, and separate us from our true end ; so that one without sin, in whom the life of God had an unobstructed course, would not be superhuman, but would alone be truly and absolutely Man.

From considering the nature of sin we must now turn to its sources. There is no point in which the traditional theology has undergone a more complete revolution. We may fairly say that the old doctrine of the fall, as it appears in the authoritative statements of faith, has been entirely disproved by the results of historical and scientific investigation. But this change must not blind us to the spiritual facts which the ancient theory attempted to explain ; and we shall find that the alteration is more in the form than in the substance, and that in some respects the ecclesiastical dogma has received striking confirmation.

If the problem of sin related only to the overt acts of an evenly balanced nature, the solution would be simple. We should have to refer sin entirely to the misuse of our free will ; and of this, as being an ultimate fact, we could give no account. We could only rest in the testimony of our consciousness that the act was our own, and that the guilt belonged to us as its originating cause. This is the view which has been generally taken of the sin of Adam. He, the perfect man, endowed with supernatural gifts, who had it in his power to lead a sinless life, chose to disobey the command of God, and so committed an act of sin in its most absolute form.

Freedom of will, being essential to moral and spiritual life, was bestowed by God upon mankind, although it left open the possibility of sin ; but the abuse of freedom is due to man himself, so that God is in no proper sense the author of sin. Whatever may be thought about the first man, this seems a correct interpretation of our consciousness of guilt. Our actions are voluntary, left, within certain necessary limits, in trust to ourselves, and, though there may be various antecedents of volition, it is the will alone which completes the act of sin.

But the question becomes much more complex when we inquire into the origin of those evil impulses and corrupt affections which remove our nature so far from its ideal. According to the traditional theology these are due entirely to the fall of our first parents, which deprived them of their original righteousness, and entailed upon their offspring a degenerate nature.

Before entering into the details of the doctrine of hereditary sin we must notice the different theories of the origin of souls, which have an immediate bearing upon this subject. Some of the early fathers, notably Origen, accepted the Platonic view that souls pre-existed, having been created together in the beginning of things, and that at birth they were united to the bodies to which they were respectively assigned. This opinion left no room for an hereditary transmission of mental qualities, but represented the moral condition as entirely dependent on individual choice, which may have been exercised in another state of being, and so have tainted the soul with sin before it entered on its earthly existence. The Church did not accept this hypothesis, which was accordingly condemned by the Council held at Constantinople in 553.<sup>1</sup> The more prevalent ecclesiastical view is that of 'creationism,' according to which souls are created constantly by God, and

<sup>1</sup> Εἴ τις τὴν μυθώδη προὔπαρξιν τῶν ψυχῶν, καὶ τὴν ταύτῃ ἐπομένην τερατώδη ἀποκατάστασιν πρεσβεύει, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω. Labbe, *Sacrosancta Concilia*, Tom. VI. 224.



infused into the bodies to which they belong. To this the difficulty attaches that one would expect a soul freshly created by God to be as pure and perfect as that of Adam before the fall. Accordingly many theologians, especially among the Lutherans, following Tertullian, have embraced the hypothesis known as 'traducianism,' according to which souls are propagated along with the bodies, and so were virtually contained in Adam, and suffered deterioration from the fall. This, however, is a question for the biologist rather than the theologian; and for the purposes of the traditional dogma the observed fact is sufficient, that the same human nature is somehow transmitted by natural means from generation to generation, preserving, amid a wonderful variety of endowment, the great essential features which distinguish man from all other animals.

The older theologians of all the important sections of the Church are agreed in representing the fall of Adam as the source of the most baleful consequences to his posterity. In the moral sphere these consequences are known by the name of original sin, *peccatum originale*. The Catholic Church, which holds a less extreme doctrine than some of the Protestant schools, is nevertheless very explicit. The first man, Adam, immediately lost, through his transgression, the holiness and righteousness which he had previously possessed, incurred the wrath and indignation of God, along with death and captivity under the power of the devil, and was wholly changed for the worse in body and soul. The injury was not confined to himself, but extended to his posterity; and he thereby deprived them of the holiness and righteousness which they might have inherited, and transfused to the whole human race not only bodily death, but also sin, which is the death of the soul. Nevertheless free will, although weakened, was not lost by the fall.<sup>1</sup> The Church of England is equally moderate, teaching that 'man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of

<sup>1</sup> Conc. Trid., Sessio v, dec. 1, 2; vi. cap. 1 and can. 5.

his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit ; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.'<sup>1</sup> The article headed 'Of free will' is not very explicit, and merely denies that man can 'turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God.'<sup>2</sup> The doctrine is presented in its extremest form in the Westminster Confession. By their fall our first parents 'became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.' From them a corrupt nature descended to all their posterity, and by this original corruption 'we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil.'<sup>3</sup>

To these sufficiently energetic statements the dogmatists add certain refinements and distinctions. The sin of Adam and Eve is described as *peccatum originale originans*, and what is ordinarily known as original sin as *peccatum originale originatum*. Original sin is so named because it proceeds from Adam, the original man ; it attaches itself to us from our birth ; and actual sins have their origin in it. The fall had two distinct effects. The *peccatum originans* passed over to Adam's posterity solely by imputation ; and by inheritance from the fallen state of Adam was derived the sinful habit or corruption of the entire nature, which is properly known as hereditary sin. This twofold sense of original sin is clearly stated, though without the word 'imputation,' in the Augsburg Confession as altered by Melancthon.<sup>4</sup> This imputation is justified on the plea that Adam was the federal head and representative of the human race, and therefore in breaking the covenant with God all

<sup>1</sup> Art. ix.<sup>2</sup> Art. x.<sup>3</sup> Chap. vi.

<sup>4</sup> Art. ii. of the *Confessio variata*, of 1540, defines 'peccatum originis' as 'reatum, quo nascentes, propter Adae lapsum, rei sunt irae Dei et mortis aeternae, et ipsam corruptionem humanae naturae propagatam ab Adam.'



his posterity were involved in his sin ; but some, in order to evade the difficulty presented by this view, ascribed the imputation to the prevision of God, who knew that Adam's descendants would have acted in the same way if they had been placed in the same circumstances. Protestant theologians generally include in the ingredients of original sin the loss of free will in spiritual things ; by which it is meant that, though men can exercise their free will in all ordinary affairs, and though they can withhold their hands from theft or murder, yet they cannot, without the Holy Spirit, and by the sole strength of nature, love God above all things, or produce the interior motives from which just works proceed.<sup>1</sup> It is apparent that this doctrine denies the executive capacity of the will, what we have described as 'real liberty,' and not the freedom of choice among courses of action which are equally open to us. Hence is drawn the inference that 'works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit . . . have the nature of sin' ;<sup>2</sup> and in deplorable opposition to the larger view of Clement of Alexandria, and even of Justin Martyr, Melanchthon (in the early form of his *Loci*) maintains that though 'there may be some constancy in Socrates, chastity in Xenocrates, temperance in Zeno, nevertheless, because they existed in impure minds, nay rather because those shadows of virtues arose from self-love, they ought not to be regarded as real virtues, but as vices.'<sup>3</sup> In the same spirit Martensen, in more modern times, while admitting that among the unregenerate there are great differences of morality when they are compared with one another, nevertheless maintains that 'all alike contradict the true ideal of humanity,' and that

<sup>1</sup> *Aug. Conf.*, Art. xviii.

<sup>2</sup> Art. xiii. of the Church of England.

<sup>3</sup> *Loci Theologici*: prima eorum aetas. *Corpus Reformatorum*. XXI, 100 sq. The passage continues, 'Tolerans fuit Socrates, sed amans gloriae, aut certe placens sibi de virtute. Fortis fuit Cato, sed amore laudis . . . quantum in Platone tumoris est et fastus . . . Aristotelis doctrina est in universum quaedam libido rixandi.'

‘even in their highest moral activity their ideals and their aims are of this world, and not for the kingdom of God.’ He seeks to make this position intelligible by referring to the opposite statement of the Apostle John, that the regenerate cannot sin. This means that the ‘regenerate, notwithstanding their relative sinfulness, cannot but will the realization of the kingdom of God; can never cease to strive after the true ideal of life.’<sup>1</sup>

Whatever may be the spiritual value of the story of Adam and Eve, regarded as a symbolical description of the nature of temptation and sin,<sup>2</sup> it can no longer be regarded as history, and it seems hardly worth while noticing the passages of Scripture which are relied upon for the establishment of a doctrine which rests on a vanishing basis. We may, however, refer very briefly to the favourite arguments from the Bible. And first we must observe that the narrative of the fall itself, though it represents Adam and Eve as placed under harder physical conditions than they enjoyed in paradise, says nothing whatever about the total moral corruption of the offenders themselves, and gives not a hint of the inherited corruption of their posterity. It is therefore the less surprising that this appalling catastrophe of the human race is hardly, if at all, alluded to in the rest of the Old Testament. A few texts are, however, appealed to. In Job xxxi. 33 we read, ‘If like Adam I covered my transgressions.’ But **כַּאֲדָם** may be translated, as our Revisers suggest in the margin, ‘after the manner of men.’ A similar remark applies to Hosea vi. 7, ‘They like Adam have transgressed the covenant,’ which may be rendered ‘are as men that have transgressed a covenant.’ The statement in Isaiah xliii. 27, ‘Thy first father sinned,’ may refer to Jacob; and the allusions to a ‘tree of life’ in Proverbs iii. 18, xiii. 12, and xv. 4, have no apparent connexion with

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Dogmatics*, translated by Rev. W. Urwick, 1866, p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> An allegorical meaning is ingeniously worked out by Martensen, pp. 155 sqq.



Genesis. But granting that these passages contain an allusion to the story of Adam and Eve, there is nothing whatever in them to sustain or to suggest the dogma of original sin. More important is such language as we find in Psalm li. 5, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.' If the doctrine were proved upon other grounds, these words would be at least in harmony with it; but no one coming to it without prepossession could find it there. They are the anguished cry of an individual soul, sorrowing for a deed of shame; and in horror at its own offence it thinks that sin had infected it even from its birth, and that it must have sprung from a sinful stock. But though the verse says nothing about Adam or the hereditary depravity of mankind, it certainly seems to recognize the transmission of a sinful tendency from parent to child; and it may be quite true that in this way God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, while nevertheless it is not true that the whole race is totally corrupt. Oriental hyperbole, however, is not a safe basis on which to erect a dogma. The same sort of argument proves the innate righteousness of men; for Job says he has been the widow's guide from his mother's womb.<sup>1</sup>

A favourite text in the New Testament is Ephesians ii. 3, 'We were by nature children of wrath<sup>2</sup> as also the rest.' Here the reference is simply to the existing facts. The Gentiles had been formerly 'dead in trespasses and sins,' and were therefore exposed to the coming judgment, which is designated by 'wrath.' The writer proceeds to affirm that the same was true of the Jewish believers. There was no natural distinction between Jew and Gentile; for all had sinned, and were alike dependent on the Divine love for their new and better life. Thus the text recognizes the

<sup>1</sup> Job xxxi. 18. Referred to in Dr. W. H. Drummond's *Essay on Original Sin*, 1832, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Τέκνα ὀργῆς.



universal fact of human sinfulness, but says nothing of either total or hereditary corruption, or of the imputation of Adam's sin. The one passage to which appeal may be made with some plausibility is Romans v. 12-21. We cannot here attempt a full exposition of this passage, and must confine ourselves to a few necessary observations. In the first place, the passage has no parallel in any other writing in the New Testament, so that we may presume that Paul has to a certain extent given his own speculations, and not the universally accepted Christian doctrine; and, with our changed view of Scripture, while we fully recognize Paul's high authority in matters purely spiritual, we cannot feel bound by modes of thought which are largely due to his rabbinical training and his natural conformity to current beliefs of his time. Secondly, the primary object of the argument is not to lay down a doctrine about the origin or extent of sin, but, assuming that, to insist that the higher spiritual life brought into the world by Christ is to become universal even more certainly than the lower sinful life inherited from Adam. Thirdly, while there is a good deal of obscurity in some parts of the exposition, we may safely say that it neither affirms nor implies the total corruption of our nature, and therefore can lend only a very shadowy support to the ecclesiastical dogma.

On the whole, then, I think we may venture to say that the dogma of original sin is completely absent from the Bible. The fact of human sinfulness is of course abundantly recognized; but so is the fact of human righteousness, and the Bible presents us with a picture of mingled good and ill with which we are all familiar in our common experience. In Christ's own teaching nothing is more remarkable than his large and generous confidence in human nature and his expectant appeal to its finer instincts and its native moral judgments. And happily the generality of mankind similarly govern their judgment by facts and not by theological fictions. I cannot help doubting whether any mind



has ever been sufficiently darkened to believe the dogma of total depravity. If it were true, our world would be simply a hell, and the human race would soon perish from mutual destruction. Those whose hearts have not been made blind and sour by false teaching will see flowers of paradise growing amid the world's ills, and, while they are deeply sensible of the ravages of sin, will yet find on all sides a sweetness and a beauty which make human nature lovable, and prove that the grace of God is not limited by our artificial rules. This remark will apply even to the moderate view lately quoted from Martensen, which represents the question as relating, not to 'different degrees of morality,' but to the 'general tendency and aim of life.'<sup>1</sup> The distinction which he draws is, I think, psychologically true, and two lives which are apparently on the same moral level may spring from such different roots as to possess quite opposite spiritual qualities. But I am not acquainted with any evidence that this distinction marks off the Christian from the non-Christian, and justifies us in putting all the wise and good of heathen times and countries among those whose aims in life were worldly and sinful. The assumption that men who seem to be good are really bad because it does not suit our theology to regard them otherwise is dangerous and uncharitable; and it is as impossible to distinguish the good and bad by some doctrinal formula or ecclesiastical connexion as it is to separate the growing wheat and tares which are inextricably mingled over the entire field of observation.

But though the traditional dogma, even in a modified form, does not correspond with the real facts of life, it seems impossible to accept the opposite doctrine that all souls are such absolutely fresh creations as to owe nothing to physical antecedents; that they are therefore, at their birth, equally in the image of God; and that sin is entirely due to the guilty action of the individual will. It would be possible to admit the existence of the evil passions to which allusion has

<sup>1</sup> p. 181.



already been made, and at the same time believe that they were not innate, but the result of our own unfaithfulness. It cannot be denied that frequent acts of disobedience beget a habit and inclination which it is difficult to resist, and that therefore our bad impulses are to a certain extent the product of our own criminal choice, and the signs rather than the source of unworthy actions. But this will hardly explain the whole case. If all souls started in a state of moral equilibrium, we should expect a considerable proportion of them to remain without sin ; and when we observe universally certain aberrations of conduct, we must believe that there is some power behind the will, which conquers and misleads it. Moreover, the great varieties of disposition among men, traceable at a very early age, seem to point to an original difference in their constitution. One, for instance, is irascible and self-assertive, another gentle and yielding ; one is covetous and miserly, another an open-handed spendthrift ; one is prone to low pleasures, another regards them with disgust. Or, if we observe men who on the whole are morally sound, we are forced to the conclusion that some are born nearer to sainthood than others, and that in fact men start on life's probation, not like racers about to traverse the same course from the same starting-point, but on every conceivable level in the moral scale, some having received much, and others little, and their spiritual endowments varying as much as their intellectual in range and power. That this diversity among mature men is not wholly due to circumstances and education may be inferred from the different moral tendencies in children of the same family, where, so far as possible, all the conditions have been the same. If these facts are opposed to the hypothesis that each soul is a new creation in the pure image of God, they are no less opposed to the doctrine of total depravity, which places all men on the dead level of absolute wickedness.

We are, therefore, driven to the intermediate doctrine that each soul is not a separate and independent individual,



which might have been created the same in Saturn or in Sirius, but a member of a race bound together in organic unity, and therefore the sharer in its nature and the inheritor of its fortunes. That we are born to die is of course beyond dispute. But if what has already been said about the universality of sin be true, it seems also certain that, though in this respect we are not under an equally inevitable law, we are born to sin ; and if, again, what has been said about our evil propensions be correct, it follows that the immediate source of sinful choice is the inherited discord of our nature. We have stormy and unholy passions which we did not create, and by which the will appears to be overweighted. But these, as we have seen, appear in very different proportions in different men ; and although the laws of heredity cannot yet be precisely defined, I think we may safely say that virtue and vice tend to run in hereditary lines, and that wicked parents may leave a terrible legacy of moral degradation to their posterity. This is powerfully illustrated by the story of the Jukes related by Mr. Dugdale, which, says Dr. A. B. Bruce, ‘ presents a melancholy record of vice, crime, pauperism, and disease, as the salient characteristics of the numerous descendants of one man born in the middle of the eighteenth century, described as a hunter and fisher, a hard drinker, jolly and companionable, and averse to steady toil.’<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the children of virtuous parents are likely to inherit moral problems of a much higher order, and to escape the temptation to brutal crime or degrading vice. This doctrine fully recognizes the terrible evil of sin as affecting the human race, and admits all that appears tenable in the ethical psychology of the traditional dogma.

If we inquire into the origin of this state of things, and the Divine reason why we are made subject to it, we are necessarily thrown back upon hypothesis, which can claim only a certain degree of probability. If the modern scientific

<sup>1</sup> *The Providential Order of the World*, p. 313. I have not been able to see the original work.



view of the origin of man be correct, and we have grown by slow evolution from a much lower form of animal life, then we must suppose that primitive man inherited a brute nature, and was swayed by the instincts and appetencies of a mere animal. The awakening and training of the conscience would be a slow and tentative process; and the sense of right, when it began to exert itself, would be the antagonist of ancient and deeply implanted habits. Thus practices which in an animal are innocent, and resorted to only for a temporary and useful object, would become complicated, first with self-consciousness, and then with a sense of sin, which would entirely change their nature. Asserting themselves in opposition to a higher law they would create a degradation of character which is impossible to inferior creatures, and, when adopted as rules of conduct, would assume a permanence which does not legitimately belong to them. Thus the transition from the brutal to the human would be at once a rise in the scale of being and a fall from pristine innocence; and the race would inherit a constitution in which the animal propensions were exaggerated, and converted from blind instincts into principles of voluntary action. Conceived in this way, the human problem, viewed in its widest aspect, would be to work out the brute, and put on the Son of God.

And now we obtain some light upon the mingled good and ill of our earthly lot. Progress by slow evolution seems to be part of the plan of providence, and a race which is to climb the heights of spiritual excellence, that slope upwards to the very throne of God, must start at the foot of the ascent, and continually lift its eyes to that which is above it. But this implies moral struggle, a wrestling with lower conditions in order to reach the higher; and if in this struggle we conquered through the strength of our own resolve alone, we should lose the consciousness of our Divine Guide, and so incur the worst failure through apparent success. Accordingly, when we let go the hand that leads us, the evil in us



rises up, and inflicts on us a humbling defeat, in order that we may seek once more the life of God, and yield ourselves to his indwelling love. Our disordered passions, therefore, furnish for each man his life's problem, through which he is to discipline his character, and by mingled victory and defeat acquire strength of resolution, and at the same time that self-despair which can find peace only in absolute self-surrender to the will of God, and in the fulness of his life within. If in this struggle to escape from the warfare of nature into the peace of God the conditions sometimes appear hard, and we suffer from the sin of ancestors or of neighbours, we must remember that this is involved in the solidarity of the race, to which we owe so many of life's blessings. Without this we should be no brotherhood, but a set of solitary atoms, cut off from the deep, advancing flood of a common human life. If we inherit ill, much more do we inherit good. If wickedness affects a few generations, goodness dominates all time, and sets up a beacon light to guide the wanderer even in far distant lands.

The occasion on which sin manifests itself in act must consist of circumstances in which we are enticed or tempted into a wrong course; for without some inducement men would not abjure what they knew to be right. We are thus led to a doctrine of temptation.

The conditions of temptation may be divided into inward and outward, which must be so related to one another that outward opportunity appeals to a desire which ought not to be gratified.

The inward conditions are of two kinds. First, there must be a desire, possessing some appreciable strength, which need not be wrong in itself, but which, even if it be innocent in the abstract, cannot be indulged without injury to a motive which presents higher claims. For instance, if we are hungry, it is natural and right to desire food; but if we can obtain the food only by plundering the poor and helpless, our craving is confronted by justice and com-



passion, and must not be satisfied. But such a desire by itself does not necessarily produce temptation. There must at the same time be some vacillation of the will. Where our decision is conclusively made, temptation cannot enter. For example, an honest man may innocently desire to have some more money, and may work diligently in order to procure it ; but if he has the opportunity of stealing it without detection, he is not tempted to do so, because he has quite decided that such a course is never to be thought of. Temptation arises when a man begins to parley with himself, and find sophistical reasons for setting aside his better knowledge.

The primary outward condition of temptation is opportunity ; for obviously we cannot be tempted to do that which lies absolutely out of our power. The most covetous man is not tempted to rob the inhabitants of the moon. But opportunity alone is not sufficient ; for we all have opportunities of doing wrong that never enter into our calculations at all. The opportunity, therefore, must be so related to our mental condition as to constitute what is ordinarily described as a trial ; and accordingly what tempts one man may be no temptation to another. A lifelong teetotaller has plenty of opportunities of getting drunk, but the most delicious wines do not tempt him ; but one who has been the victim of intoxication may find in the very smell of alcohol a temptation of overpowering force. The opportunity, then, must be one which presses itself on the attention of the particular mind affected, and which it is difficult to resist. The martyr cannot be insensible to the torture of the rack ; and though his faith may be too firm to entertain the possibility of yielding, still the opportunity of apostasy is there in all its power, and can be refused only by the most heroic resolution. If he wavers, and so supplies the inward conditions, he is really tempted, and feels the outward occasion as an inducement to wrongdoing. If there is no wavering, and he endures the torture as he would bear the agony of an illness from



which there is no escape, then the opportunity becomes simply a trial of his virtue, and that peculiar inducement which we associate with the word temptation disappears.

The question why we are subject to temptation belongs to the doctrine of providence rather than to the present head. But we may say briefly that trials are needful for the discipline of character, and that a paradise of untempted ease could never have produced the saints and heroes who are the chief ornaments of our humanity. The fact that these trials are under the control of wisdom and love may serve as a guarantee for each of us that we shall not be tried beyond the measure of our strength, and that so long as we love God all things work together for good. There are indeed exceptional cases in which we cannot see that this is true, and we can only trust that in the end the unseen good will be revealed. These cases belong to the problem of evil which we have already considered ; but, taking a large view, I think we are justified in accepting the dictate of piety, that trials are intended, not to lure us into sin, but to work out our spiritual good.

While we are on the subject of temptation, it is necessary to consider the doctrine of the devil and of evil spirits. That one potent source of temptation exists in the example and solicitations of evil spirits, in the shape of bad men, requires no proof. This is inevitable if we are to live in a mixed society, where we are brought into relations with every kind of character. We all like to stand well with our fellows, and it requires a good deal of moral courage to assert our own higher ideas of right against the lower maxims of those around us. But the opportunity for sin which is thus afforded is also an opportunity for virtue, and the mingling currents of good and evil are involved in that solidarity of the race to which we have already alluded. The case, however, is very different if we are exposed to the attacks of unseen foes, who rob us of our better thoughts, and breathe evil suggestions and longings into our minds, without our even

being aware of their presence. Is there a devil who is permitted thus to assail us in the dark ?

The belief in the devil and his agents has occupied a conspicuous place in the history of Christianity, and in the Middle Ages grew into a loathsome and brutal superstition. The existence of a world of demons, presided over by a chief, and exercising a terrible influence in human affairs, receives no doubtful recognition in the New Testament, and apparently is accepted by Christ himself. The details belong to the theology of the New Testament ; but here we may observe that whatever is said on this subject seems to be borrowed from current thought, and that a doctrine of satanic agency is nowhere laid down as a fundamental article of belief. A doctrine thus accepted, and not defined or enforced, occupies a very different position from the teachings which separate Christians from others, and therefore have their source in the new spiritual insight of the first believers, or even from doctrines which, being current, are not only admitted, but are earnestly taught with a variety of appeal and illustration ; and it is very significant that, though the devil is represented as the tempter in the account of Christ's temptation, he is nevertheless ignored when a doctrine of temptation and sin is formally expounded, as in the Epistle to the Romans or the first chapter of the Epistle of James. We may fairly infer from this fact that the doctrine is not vital to Christianity, but is among those clinging modes of thought which may disappear under the influence of knowledge and experience, without detriment, or even with benefit, to the fundamental faith.

It is not easy to reconcile the enormous power which has been generally ascribed to Satan in the affairs of men with Christ's doctrine of a fatherly providence ; and although monotheism is formally rescued by the supposition that Satan is a fallen archangel, yet he has been represented as such a successful rival of God that the belief in him, as it was at one time currently held, was practically equivalent to



dualism. It is only when thus held that it can afford any comfort in contemplating the evils of the world. It has been ingeniously argued by Dr. Edwin A. Abbott that, if we regard the devil as the author of the terrible calamities which afflict mankind, it will be easier for us to believe in the kindly providence of God.<sup>1</sup> But unless the devil is an eternal and independent power antagonistic to God, I cannot see how our difficulties are relieved; for if he be only a fallen creature, as monotheism requires, then it would be possible to terminate his mischief at a single blow, either by annihilating or by depriving him of his power, and, for my own part, it is more satisfying to regard some things as mysteries which are insoluble by our present wisdom than to trace all evils to the machinations of an undefeated rebel, who has managed to appropriate so large a portion of our world. Such a doctrine gives no real explanation of evil, but only deludes the thoughtless by pushing back the problem to a time which is out of sight.

A much stronger argument might, I think, be founded on those strange bursts of moral evil to which men are liable, involuntary suggestions of wrongdoing which are quite inconsistent with the general bent of the life. At such times it may seem as though a fiend were getting hold of us, or malignantly whispering his own abominable thoughts. Perhaps experiences of this kind are largely responsible for the long continued belief in satanic agency. But we may refer these things to the remnants of our brute nature. As it is said that the nature of a savage, who has been brought up among civilized men, will sometimes break forth into temporary excesses, so in men who belong to races that have long been civilized there may be a short-lived reversion to the savage or brutal type, and it is more reasonable to ascribe these painful phenomena to our place in the scale of evolution than to the wily seductions of a wicked spirit.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Christian Reformer*, Vol. I, April, 1886, and following numbers, where the question is discussed by several writers.

Since, then, the belief in the devil arose and flourished in superstitious times, and since his existence is neither proved by experience nor guaranteed by the necessary suppositions of the religious nature, this old and widespread conviction has quietly dropped out of our thought, and the language connected with it has become merely a convenient symbol of the whole external realm of moral evil.

The belief in demoniacal possession rests on somewhat different grounds. It was founded on abnormal physiological phenomena, in which apparently the sufferer himself frequently felt as though he were under the dominion of some alien person or even of a multitude of spirits who had taken up their abode in him. No educated man, I suppose, would now resort to such an explanation, and were it not for the cases recorded in the Gospels the belief in demons would be practically dead. But it is argued with some force that this subject is so closely connected with religion that we cannot suppose the great teacher to have been mistaken without dangerously impugning his authority.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly some feel constrained to believe that at least in the time of Christ evil spirits were allowed to take possession of men, while others think that Jesus, in order to exercise his healing power, simply adapted his language to the belief of the sufferers and their friends. The latter supposition has, I am afraid, no evidence to sustain it; and if we reject the belief, we must admit that Jesus accepted in this instance the mistaken notions of his time. But this admission, though it is inconsistent with his omniscience or infallibility, attributes which he never claimed, does not derogate seriously from his spiritual authority. On the subject of demons there is little that is express or positive in his teaching. When he reasons on the subject, the spiritual substance of what he says might be otherwise expressed; and if we collected into an organic whole the great principles of his doctrine, the omission of all reference to demons could not

<sup>1</sup> See Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, Note by the Editor, p. 180.



cause any obvious mutilation. We may, then, view this doctrine of demoniacal possession in the same light as that of the devil, and regard it as one of the temporary fringes of Christian thought, which would drop away when the real genius of Christianity had worked out its spiritual results.

It remains, then, that our doctrine of sin must be regarded as complete without bringing it into connexion with a fallen archangel, or with a host of malignant spirits whose only care is to ruin mankind.

## PART IV

# THE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN AS AFFECTED BY HISTORICAL CONDITIONS

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### CHAPTER I

#### REASONS FOR SELECTING CHRISTIANITY

THE title which stands at the head of this division of our scheme of doctrine suggests a far wider range of inquiry than properly belongs to our present treatise. It might lead us to survey all the great religions of the world, and to consider what truths they inculcated, and what moral and spiritual tendencies they fostered, since they all had some characteristic influence in affecting for good or for evil the relations between God and man. And indeed from our modern point of view such an inquiry must seem to be entirely suitable to this discussion ; for as our thought and sympathy have expanded, and our knowledge of various religions has increased, and as it has become apparent that Christianity, in the course of its history from the earliest times, has embraced many questionable doctrines and practices, it has been found impossible to divide religions into the one true and the many false. We have learned to believe the teaching of St. John, that the Divine Word, though often oppressed with darkness, has been the light of every man, an inward ideal struggling for realization, and leading mankind on towards the perfect thought of God. And so



we have to deal with a world-wide movement of many separated and hostile nations marching along converging lines towards one distant goal. Everywhere we recognize the presence of the Divine Leader, and catch the whispers of eternal Reason in prophet or sage or saint.

Nevertheless we select Christianity for exclusive treatment at present ; and we do so for two reasons. In endeavouring to survey religions from the outside and to form an impartial judgment of their respective merits, we believe that Christianity stands at the head, enshrining within it the largest truth and the deepest spirituality. I should like to confirm this statement by the words of one whose knowledge of other religions was incomparably greater than my own, and who was a foremost pleader for an impartial and reverent study of them, as all containing their share of Divine truth. Professor Max Müller says, ' There are some portions of the Bible which, I believe, most Christians would not be sorry to miss. But that is nothing in comparison to the absurd and even revolting stories occurring in Sanskrit books which are called sacred. In that respect it is quite true that there is no comparison between our own sacred book, the New Testament, and the Sacred Books of the East.'<sup>1</sup> Again, ' With all that I have said in order to show that other religions also contain all that is necessary for salvation, it would be simply dishonest on my part were I to hide my conviction that the religion taught by Christ, and free as yet from all ecclesiastical fences and intrenchments, is the best, the purest, the truest religion the world has ever seen. When I look at the world as it is, I often say that we seem to be living two thousand years before, not after Christ.'<sup>2</sup> And once more, ' We have subjected Christianity to the severest criticism and have not found it wanting. We have done what St. Paul exhorts every Christian to do, we have proved everything, we have not been afraid to compare Christianity with any other religion, and if we have retained it, we have

<sup>1</sup> *Gifford Lectures, Physical Religion*, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 363 sq.

done so, because we found it best.’<sup>1</sup> If this view be correct, we shall find that Christianity takes up and assimilates what is true and worthy in other forms of religion; and if our previous remarks have been just, we shall see in it a grand exemplification and revealing of great spiritual laws, rather than a portent absolutely exceptional, the only heavenly light that flashes amid the dark superstitions of mankind. Whether this is so or not must appear as our investigation proceeds.

But a second and more weighty reason exists for our selection: our own religious life has been shaped by Christianity. It is impossible for us to regard the religions of the world with the suggested impartiality; for Christian ideas have been wrought into the fibre of our being. We cannot, if we would, discard from our minds, or regard with cold indifference, the Sermon on the Mount, the Parables beside the Lake of Galilee, Gethsemane, the Cross, the little band of Apostles struggling with a hostile world. And accordingly, if we endeavour to interpret our religious consciousness, it is a Christian consciousness that meets us, and it is only through this that we can act as exponents of religious thought. Naturally, therefore, our primary task must be to draw forth into articulate expression the truths which are implicit in the Christian spirit, and to prove these, so far as they are amenable to such tests, by the appropriate instruments of knowledge and criticism.

With this preliminary explanation we may proceed to our task.

<sup>1</sup> *Theosophy or Psychological Religion*, p. 26.



## CHAPTER II

### RECONCILIATION

THE implicit aim of all religions is to establish harmony between the soul and God. I say implicit, because we can conceive of a religion which simply expresses itself in adoration and reverence, without explicitly aiming at anything. But in Christianity this aim is dominant. It is a missionary religion, which seeks to establish the kingdom of God in the world, and to do so by restoring between the soul and God the harmonious relation which has been lost by sin, or at least by producing a harmony which the soul, in consequence of sin, has not yet attained. As our view of the end which has to be secured must affect our whole conception of the agency which is designed to secure it, we must begin our investigation by making clear to our thought the nature of this end, or, in other words, by framing a doctrine of reconciliation.

The need of reconciliation is due to the universal fact of sin. As a faulty little child is miserable till relations of amity are restored between itself and its mother, so the soul is disturbed and unhappy so long as it is conscious of alienation between itself and God. Now the establishment of the violated harmony necessarily involves a change in either God or man or in both, and accordingly two strongly contrasted views immediately suggest themselves. We may say that the enmity is dissolved by the reconciliation of God to us, or by the reconciliation of us to God ; and these two forms of belief have actually been held.

The Catholic doctrine is not as explicit as might be wished. The Catechismus Romanus speaks of a satisfaction 'which has rendered God propitious to us and appeased';<sup>1</sup> but elsewhere it represents the change as mutual—'For he has reconciled us to the Father, and rendered him appeased and propitious to us.'<sup>2</sup> The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent lay emphasis upon the change in man—'Christ who has reconciled us to God';<sup>3</sup> and, 'Justification itself . . . which is not only a remission of sins, but also sanctification, and renewal of the inward man through voluntary acceptance of grace and of the gifts, whence man from being unjust is made just, and from an enemy a friend.'<sup>4</sup> In opposition to this doctrine, the early Protestants taught that Christ suffered 'to reconcile his Father to us,'<sup>5</sup> and that, although a change in man's condition followed, the reconciliation was itself wholly on the side of God, who through a forensic act imputed to man the righteousness of Christ. This doctrine assumes that God was in a state of wrath against sin, and then was appeased and became propitious to certain men prior to any moral change within them. It probably sprang from two spiritual roots: first, an exaggerated feeling of human incapacity and helplessness, combined with the admitted fact that we could not by good works *earn* the favour of God, and by our service place him under obligations to us; and secondly, a profound sense of the infinite majesty and holiness of God, who, like some great king offended by the disobedience of his subjects, could not attend to

<sup>1</sup> 'Quae nobis Deum propitium et placatum reddidit': Pars II, Cap. V, lxxxvii.

<sup>2</sup> 'Patri enim nos reconciliavit, eumque nobis placatum et propitium reddidit': Pars I, Cap. V, xxiii. quartum.

<sup>3</sup> 'Christi qui nos Deo reconciliavit': Sessio V, De peccato originali, 3.

<sup>4</sup> 'Justificatio ipsa . . . quae non est sola peccatorum remissio, sed et sanctificatio, et renovatio interioris hominis per voluntariam susceptionem gratiae et donorum, unde homo ex injusto fit justus, et ex inimico amicus': Sessio VI, De Justificatione, Cap. vii.

<sup>5</sup> Article ii. of the Church of England.



anything that men might say or do in extenuation of their fault. It was he, therefore, who had to be appeased by some worthy offering made to his outraged sanctity.

The first objection to this doctrine, from the Christian point of view, is that it is opposed to the teaching of the New Testament. There we hear of the world or of men being reconciled to God,<sup>1</sup> but never of God being reconciled to men. Grimm indeed maintains that the Greek word (καταλλάσσεσθαι) may mean 'to be received into favour,' and in support of this appeals to Xenophon's *Anabasis* I. vi. 2, where it is said that Orontes was received into favour (καταλλαγείς) by Cyrus. I do not see, however, that the word there requires this signification. What we are told is that Orontes had formerly carried on war against Cyrus, but had become reconciled to him; and this naturally means that he had ceased carrying on war, and had taken the side of Cyrus, and cannot possibly mean that Cyrus had taken him into favour, while still experiencing his hostility. The changed relations were due to a real or apparent change in Orontes; and the fact that he subsequently proved to be a traitor does not alter the meaning of the word.<sup>2</sup> Cremer<sup>3</sup> appeals also to Sophocles, *Ajax*, 743 sq., where it is said that Ajax is gone to be reconciled to the gods.<sup>4</sup> But although Ajax has declared that he is hated by the gods,<sup>5</sup> I see no reason for departing from the proper meaning of the passive voice. No doubt the gods, as being angry, had to be reconciled; but the change suggested is not in the gods, but in Ajax, who had to alter his judgment, and submit. This is even more apparent in the Greek than in the English translation 'reconcile,' for the root meaning of the word is 'change'; and when it is said that a man has been changed towards another, the meaning cannot surely be that the other has

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 10, xi. 15; II Cor. v. 18-20; Eph. ii. 16; Col. i. 22.

<sup>2</sup> See Grimm, *Inst. Th. dog.*, p. 374, note 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Wörterbuch*.

<sup>4</sup> Οἷχεται . . . θεοῖσιν ὡς καταλλαχθῇ χόλου.

<sup>5</sup> Ὅστις ἐμφανῶς θεοῖς ἐχθαίρομαι. 457 sq.

been changed towards him, although that may be a consequence of his own prior change. Let us suppose a case in which one man has a claim against another, which he has no moral right to relinquish, and which obliges him to keep the other at a distance : if the other, after a period of obstinate persistence in wrong, at last gives in, and acknowledges the claim, it is strictly he that terminates the enmity by becoming reconciled to the necessary conditions. This affords the proper explanation of a passage to which Cremer further appeals, Matthew v. 23 sq., 'If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled<sup>1</sup> to thy brother.' Here it is evident that the man offering the gift has injured his brother ; as the context suggests, he has been angry with him, and used reproachful words ; and although the brother may be reasonably offended, the enmity is on the side of the offender, and it is by a change in him, by confession and apology, that the reconciliation must be effected. Grimm, with whom Cremer agrees, relies on II Corinthians v. 18, where it is said that God reconciled us to himself ; and he contends that this must mean 'took us into his favour,' because it is added that he was not imputing its trespasses to the world. It is curious how frequently Paul must mean something quite different from what he says. Here surely the natural meaning is that there is an offer of free forgiveness if men will lay aside their enmity, and turn to God ; not that God is taking men into favour, without caring how bad they are. And accordingly Paul entreats those whom he addresses to be reconciled to God—a very needless and unpractical exhortation if God had been the enemy, and had already completed the act of reconciliation with the whole world. So far is Paul from taking this view that he represents himself as an ambassador for Christ, who was carrying to men a Divine entreaty that they would be reconciled to God, clearly

<sup>1</sup> Διαλλάγηθι.



implying that the reconciliation, to say the least, was not complete, and that it depended upon men to complete it. Again, that the enmity is conceived as on the side of man is perfectly clear from Colossians i. 20-22. The disciples in time past had been alienated and enemies in their mind<sup>1</sup> in their evil works, but had been reconciled by Christ through his death, to present them holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before God. I know, indeed, that such words are, through an unnatural exegesis, emptied of all moral signification; but what Paul means by 'alienated' is made unmistakably evident in Ephesians iv. 17-19: it is vanity of mind, darkness of understanding, alienation from the life of God, the grossest sensuality.

Perhaps the most difficult passage, from this point of view, is Romans v. 11, 'through whom now we received the reconciliation'; for it is evident that the reconciliation here spoken of must be a gift. But may not a change in our hearts from enmity to love towards God be a gift? If we have rebelled against our king, and regard him with suspicion, and distrust his laws, although he is perfectly wise and just; and if he sends his son to us to assure us of his free and full pardon if we will return to our duty; and if this son, while delivering his message in all graciousness, is seized by the baser sort, and murdered; and if these things break our hearts, and make us return to our allegiance, may we not say that we have been reconciled to our king through the death of his son, and through him we have received the reconciliation, and have been brought nigh by his blood? Yet in such a case it is we that are changed; it is our enmity that is overcome; and it is the king who has reconciled us to himself by exposing his son, whom they ought to have revered, to the malice and violence of his guilty subjects.

The language in I Peter iii. 18 is different, and is even less ambiguous in meaning: Christ suffered 'that he might bring us to God,' not that he might bring God to us; and even

<sup>1</sup> Ἐχθροὺς τῇ διαβολῇ.

the Epistle to the Hebrews, with all its sacrificial phrases, declares that the final object is to 'cleanse the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.'<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with this view God is described as, in his essence, love,<sup>2</sup> as having loved the world,<sup>3</sup> as having proved his love towards us<sup>4</sup>; and this is in complete agreement with the teaching of Christ himself, who invariably represents God as a loving Father, to whom the sinner may at any moment return. In the parable of the prodigal son there is no reconciling of an angry father, who wielded the scourge of a just vengeance; and it is a strange way of showing respect to Christ, to destroy the whole impression of this beautiful parable by affirming that he had all that in his mind, though he did not choose to express it. This is saying in effect that he ought to have had a modern dogmatist at his elbow to prompt him in his teaching. If we are content to listen humbly to him who taught us to love our enemies, we shall know that God is unchangeable love, and that, though our enmity may wound that love, it can never destroy it.

A second objection to the doctrine in question is that it is opposed to the highest spiritual consciousness. It is not right to be implacable. Again and again Christ warns us against this evil disposition, and places it in marked contrast with the forgiving mercy of God; and therefore to represent God as the unforgiving enemy of mankind, till his anger has been bought off, is to ascribe to him a temper which the Christian conscience regards as evil. But admitting that it is right for the supremely holy to be implacable towards the sinner, it cannot be right to become propitious towards him while he remains unchanged in his sin; and it is an essential part of this doctrine that no change whatever takes place in sinful man till after God has been reconciled. Theologians of course endeavour to relieve this difficulty by a doctrine of atonement, which must be considered further on. But no doctrine of atonement can remove the objection

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ix. 14.

<sup>2</sup> I John iv. 16.

<sup>3</sup> John iii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Romans v. 8.



that, without any change in the object of his regard, God looks upon man at one time with disfavour, and at another time with favour, so that the relation between God and man is altered by a change in God.

We must fall back, then, upon the doctrine of Paul, that the purpose of Christianity is to reconcile the world to God ; in other words, to restore the broken harmony between the soul and God by a change, not in God, but in man. The enmity is on the side of man. It is he that chafes against the Divine will, and hews out for himself paths which the Divine righteousness cannot approve. That righteousness remains eternal and unalterable ; and man must be brought to take his part with it, to love it, and to yield himself in humble trust to the will of God as the only good. God cannot be reconciled to sin, which is for ever contrary to him. It is the human will that must surrender itself ; it is man's pride and stubbornness that must be broken. It is only when the soul has a perfect harmony and communion of spirit with God that our reconciliation is complete ; but, in a less exalted sense, we may be said to be reconciled when we have laid aside our enmity, and, turning with a broken and contrite heart to God, commit ourselves humbly to the leading of his will. According to this view God's love is the eternal source of all spiritual blessings, waiting, waiting for the answering love of his wayward children, who must come to it at last as their true and final home.

It is said, however, that, as alienation is mutual, it makes no difference whether we speak of man as reconciled to God or of God as reconciled to man. This plea is founded on the analogy of human enmity ; and though we have already touched upon it, we must notice it more fully. Enemies generally hate one another, and therefore, if reconciliation take place, there must be a mutual approximation ; for so long as one hates the other, the hatred will be returned. But even in mundane affairs it is not always so. He who has seriously and prayerfully tried in any concrete case

to follow Christ's rule of loving our enemies knows that the estrangement need not be mutual. There may be unreasonable suspicion and animosity on one side, while there is nothing but forbearance and love on the other. Then he who, though disapproving of his conduct, nevertheless loves the offender, and whose love is constantly repelled and misrepresented, can only wait in hope of better things. He does not need to be reconciled, or induced to lay aside an enmity which he does not feel ; but he remains unchanged, wishing only that the other may be brought to see things truly, and to return love for love. So it is with the heavenly Father, the unchangeable fountain of goodness, who never ceases to love his most erring children, and asks them only to repent, and come to him to be healed. This is the picture which presents itself to the mind when we speak of reconciling man to God. But when we speak of reconciling God to man, we forget for a moment the hostility of the latter, and think only of the offended sovereign, whom his trembling subjects are anxious to propitiate, and whose wrath is bought off by some costly gift.

But then what is meant by 'the wrath of God,' of which we hear in the New Testament ?<sup>1</sup> Before attempting to answer this question we may remark that the expression is absent from a large majority of the books of the New Testament, and is nowhere ascribed to Christ. It may be inferred, however, that Christ sanctioned the idea from his use of the verb 'to be angry'<sup>2</sup> in two of his parables, that of the unforgiving servant, and that of the marriage feast,<sup>3</sup> and there can be no doubt that he recognized a Divine law of retribution. But it is evident that the wrath of God

<sup>1</sup> Ὀργή, John iii. 36 ; Rom. i. 18, ii. 5, 8, iii. 5, v. 9, ix. 22 ; Eph. v. 6 ; Col. iii. 6 ; I Thess. ii. 16, v. 9 ; Heb. iii. 11, iv. 3 (both in the same quotation from the Old Testament) ; Rev. xi. 18, xiv. 10, xvi. 19, xix. 15. Θυμός Rom. ii. 8 ; Rev. xiv. 10, 19, xv. 1, 7, xvi. 1, 19, xix. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ὀργίζεσθαι.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xviii. 34, and xxii. 7 with its parallel in Luke xiv. 21.



was no dominant note in the highest teaching of Christianity ; and that, unless we assume the presence of quite inconsistent teaching in the writings of the same author, it must have been regarded as something which is compatible with absolute love, and indeed necessarily springs out of it. It cannot therefore be the anger of personal offence, but must be the displeasure which God, as the Holy One, feels against sin. If we spoke only of God’s love, we might think him indifferent to moral distinctions. But when we hear of his ‘ wrath against all impiety and unrighteousness of men,’ we remember that sin is alien to him, that his love is holy, and that he does not, like some weak and foolish parents, endeavour to gratify his children with selfish pleasure, but would draw them up to himself in the communion of holiness, and impart to them the fulness of spiritual life. Accordingly the moral discipline which tends to break the power of sin, the severity which makes the careless heart pause and see whither it is drifting, springs from his changeless love ; and wrath is only the aspect which that love wears in the presence of sin, and is so terrible to the conscience because it does not rest on personal offence, but is an expression of judgment founded on the eternal laws of righteousness. It is best symbolized by the wrath which we feel against some distant outrage, in which we have no concern. It is possible to experience such just and holy wrath, and yet so to love the offender as to wish that he would turn from his wickedness, and become reconciled to justice and compassion. This wrath cannot and ought not to be laid aside so long as men persist in their ‘ hardness and impenitent heart ’ ; and yet all the time the goodness of God may be seeking to lead them to repentance.

It follows, then, that Christianity, as a religion of salvation, does not aim at saving men from an angry God, and making him propitious to them, but at reconciling men to the Father in heaven, by turning their hearts to him, and lifting their souls towards their Divine ideal. This conclusion must necessarily colour our judgment of many points that will come before us.

### CHAPTER III

## THE PERSON OF CHRIST

JESUS CHRIST, as the founder of the Christian religion, is the great agent through whom the reconciliation spoken of in the last chapter is wrought ; and accordingly we must consider first that portion of our subject which is generally known as Christology, or the doctrine of Christ's person and work.

Those who would sink Jesus into the common crowd of mankind scoff at the notion of a Christology, and maintain that we no more need a doctrine about Jesus than we do about Brown, Jones, or Robinson. Yet in saying this they are themselves laying down a doctrine which differs widely from that which has been generally entertained. In any case the objection seems to rest on a misunderstanding. The term 'Christology' is not intended to prejudge any question about the Messianic claims of Jesus, but, at least at the beginning of our investigation, this department of theology employs the term Christ simply as a convenient proper name. Now, whatever may be our view, Jesus is among the exceptions in the world's history, and, whatever may be the cause, his name is above every other earthly name. If for the moment we regard him purely from the human and historical point of view, and attempt to classify him, he belongs to that small band of exalted spiritual souls who have profoundly influenced the religious life and thought of the world ; and when we ask, why was this, and what does it mean, our answer must express some particular view—in



other words, must lay down a doctrine. Let us take as an example the case of Mohammed. Four different views have been taken—that he was the supreme prophet of God ; that he was a genuine prophet, though by no means the highest in character and gift ; that he was a self-deceived fanatic ; that he was an impostor : and whichever of these we embrace, that will be our doctrine about Mohammed, though, as Mohammed does not enter into our Christian theology, we generally employ some other term. About ordinary men these religious questions do not arise, and we have consequently no doctrine. They disappear individually into the multitude, and come in the mass under the general doctrines of anthropology. But to live in a Christian country and pretend to this complete indifference about Jesus Christ is a very poor form of affectation ; and I must assume that we approach this question with at least a sincere desire to understand the source of the great Christian movement, and to apprehend whatever revelation is contained in the spirit of that wonderful personality from whose influence it sprang.

In seeking for a doctrine of the person of Christ we may most conveniently start with the ecclesiastical dogma ; and in setting forth its several constituent parts we may follow the order of their historical development. The dogma, like that of the Trinity, required centuries of doubtful, and sometimes savage, strife before it was established in its final form ; and it may reasonably be questioned whether many modern Christians, reputedly orthodox, hold it without some implication of heresy.

In the first place, then, Jesus Christ is regarded as man, in the full and perfect sense. That he was strictly human was naturally taken for granted by the first disciples, who had lived with him, and witnessed his weariness and suffering, his joys and his tears. Accordingly in the earliest Christian speech he is described simply as ‘ a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs,’ and one

whom 'God *made* both Lord and Christ.'<sup>1</sup> The denial of his proper humanity was one of the earliest heresies. With the dreamy speculation which at that time prevailed in the East, some, guided by their belief that matter was intrinsically evil, denied the reality of Christ's body, and maintained that he had come only in the semblance of human flesh. This 'Docetism,' as it was called, is apparently referred to in the strong assertion that 'every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.'<sup>2</sup> It seemed that the power of Christianity would be frittered away in idle fancies if Jesus were only a spectral visitor, who did not share our nature, and triumph over our bodily temptations and obstructions. This particular form of error passed completely away, and is quite alien to all our modern thought. But there was, at a later period, a far subtler kind of heresy, which is perhaps far from extinct, though not openly avowed. Apollinaris, Bishop of Laodicea, in the latter half of the fourth century, maintained that Christ's human nature was only partial, consisting of the body and the vital principle, called by the Greeks the 'non-rational soul,'<sup>3</sup> but being without the highest part, the rational soul or spirit,<sup>4</sup> which was replaced by the Divine Logos. This view was condemned as heresy by the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381; and the Council of Chalcedon, in 451, laid down the dogmatic definition that Jesus Christ was 'perfect in humanity . . . truly man, consisting of rational soul and body . . . of the same substance with us according to the humanity, in everything like us, with the exception of sin.'<sup>5</sup>

This doctrine, however, is not sufficient; for it in no way

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 22, 36. See also Peter's speech in Acts x. 34-43, where we are told that God anointed him with holy spirit and power, was with him, raised him from the dead on the third day, and appointed him judge.

<sup>2</sup> I John iv. 2.    <sup>3</sup> Ψυχὴ ἄλογος.    <sup>4</sup> Ψυχὴ λογική, οἱ νοῦς, οἱ πνεῦμα.

<sup>5</sup> Τέλειον ἐν ἀνθρωπότητι, . . . ἄνθρωπον ἀληθῶς, τὸν αὐτὸν ἐκ ψυχῆς λογικῆς καὶ σώματος, . . . ὁμοούσιον τὸν αὐτὸν ἡμῖν κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα, κατὰ πάντα ὅμοιον ἡμῖν, χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας.



distinguishes Jesus from other men except through his sinlessness. That he was the Messiah was the primary and fundamental doctrine ; and it was implied in this that he stood in some special relation to God. The earliest form in which this implication was expressed, following the ordinary Jewish view, represents him, according to Acts, simply as a divinely gifted man, 'a man approved of God,'<sup>1</sup> God's 'servant,'<sup>2</sup> 'the holy and righteous one,'<sup>3</sup> whom God 'anointed with holy spirit and power.'<sup>4</sup> There are in Paul and John suggestions of a higher nature ; but their language, though serving as a starting-point for later speculation, is certainly obscure, and susceptible of different interpretations. The earlier doctrine maintained its ground for a considerable time. There is nothing in the Apostles' Creed, the most ancient form of the rule of faith, which is inconsistent with it ; and as late as the middle of the second century Justin Martyr refrains, in spite of his own more speculative creed, from treating as heretics those who believed that Jesus was purely human,<sup>5</sup> and Christ by 'election.'<sup>6</sup>

In time, however, the incarnation of the Logos, the eternal Son of God and second person of the Trinity, was explicitly recognized as the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Then arose a series of subtle questions, which called for definition, and were decided, amid scenes of strife and bloodshed, by the voice of majorities. The second person of the Trinity and the man Jesus, if considered apart, were two persons ; what, then, was the nature of their union ? This question is not answered by the Nicene or Constantinopolitan Creed ; and different opinions on the subject soon came into fierce conflict. The Alexandrian theologians laid the chief stress on the unity of the divine and human in Christ, while those of Antioch insisted on their distinction. An acute controversy arose out of the use of the term 'God-bearing' or

<sup>1</sup> ii. 22.<sup>2</sup> Παῖδα, iii. 13, 26.<sup>3</sup> iii. 14.<sup>4</sup> x. 38. Also see iv. 27.<sup>5</sup> Ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἀνθρώπων.<sup>6</sup> Dial. 48. See before, under the doctrine of the Trinity.

‘Mother of God,’<sup>1</sup> which had become a favourite appellation of the Virgin Mary. This offended Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, who belonged to the school of Antioch. He refused to admit that Mary could give birth to the Divine nature, and proposed to substitute for the favourite term the word ‘Christ-bearer.’<sup>2</sup> He denied the unification<sup>3</sup> of the two natures, and would concede only a junction.<sup>4</sup> The junction, however, was so intimate that God was inseparable from man, and Nestorius was willing to worship the visible on account of the invisible; he separated the natures, but unified the honour paid to them.<sup>5</sup> Cyril of Alexandria violently opposed this doctrine, and went so far as to say that the ‘two natures were unified, and after the unification, as the division into two was now removed, the nature of the Son was one, as of one, save that he has put on man and become incarnate.’<sup>6</sup> The meaning of the concluding words is not at once obvious; but they seem to suggest that in spite of the incarnation the nature of the Son was as much one as that of any single being. The third general Council, held at Ephesus in 431, condemned ‘the bitter and perverse opinions of Nestorius,’<sup>7</sup> but did not lay down any definition which could terminate the dispute. The way was left open for the opposite error, which was known as Monophysitism, the doctrine of a single nature. The ferocious Cyril, ‘of most holy memory,’<sup>8</sup> notwithstanding

<sup>1</sup> Θεοτόκος.

<sup>2</sup> Χριστοτόκος.

<sup>3</sup> Ένωσις.

<sup>4</sup> Συνάφεια.

<sup>5</sup> Διὰ τὸν κεκρυμμένον προσκυνῶ τὸν φαινόμενον· ἀχώριστος τοῦ φαινομένου θεός· διὰ τοῦτο τοῦ μὴ χωριζομένου τὴν τιμὴν οὐ χωρίζω· χωρίζω τὰς φύσεις, ἀλλ’ ἐνῶ τὴν προσκύνησιν. Quoted by Hagenbach, *Hist. of Doc.* I, p. 392.

<sup>6</sup> Δύο μὲν φύσεις ἠνώσθαί φαμεν, μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἔνωσιν, ὡς ἀνηρημένης ἤδη τῆς εἰς δύο διατομῆς, μίαν εἶναι πιστεύομεν τὴν τοῦ υἱοῦ φύσιν ὡς ἑνός, πλὴν ἐνανθρωπήσαντος καὶ σεσαρκωμένου. Quoted by Grimm, *Inst. The.*, p. 333, note 6.

<sup>7</sup> Τὰ πικρὰ καὶ διεστραμμένα τοῦ Νεστορίου δόγματα.

<sup>8</sup> Coupled with Pope Celestine as οἱ ἀγιώτατοι τὴν μνήμην in the definition of faith of the Council of Chalcedon.



his rash expression, was regarded as the champion of orthodoxy ; but the doctrine of one nature in Christ was distinctly taught by Eutyches, an archimandrite, or chief of a monastery, in Constantinople. He maintained that after the birth of Christ there was only one nature, that of the incarnate God ; and this dogma was actually ratified by a general Council held at Ephesus in 449, which, owing to its heretical decision, has been stigmatized as the ‘robber synod.’ The fourth œcumenical Council met at Chalcedon in 451. The definition of faith which was there agreed upon condemns those who introduce confusion and mixture, and invent the foolish doctrine that there is one nature of the flesh and of the Deity, and monstrosly teach that by the confusion (of the two natures) the Divine nature of the Only-begotten is capable of suffering. It then goes on to say that Jesus Christ was perfect in Deity and perfect in humanity, ‘one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably, the difference of the natures being nowhere abolished on account of the unification, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and running together into one person and one subsistence, not partitioned or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten, God Logos, the Lord Jesus Christ.’<sup>1</sup> The statement that the two natures were not confused is directed against Eutyches ; that they were inseparable, against Nestorius. We must very carefully observe the distinction that, while it was a damnable error to say that the two natures were poured together into one nature, it was orthodox to say that they ran together into one person.

But even an infallible Council of excited controversialists cannot anticipate all the wiles of error. If Christ was only one person, then surely he had only one will and one energy ;<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Εἰς ἓν πρόσωπον καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν συντρεχούσης, οὐκ εἰς δύο πρόσωπα μεριζόμενον κ.τ.λ.

<sup>2</sup> Ἐν θέλημα καὶ μία ἐνέργεια.

but, on the other hand, if he was two perfect natures, he must have had two wills. Hence, in the seventh century, the flames of strife were once more kindled. It was thought indeed that Monothelitism, the doctrine of a single will, would serve to conciliate the Monophysites. Not only the Bishops of Constantinople, of Antioch, and of Alexandria pronounced in favour of this error, but Pope Honorius I committed himself to the doctrine of one will. It is contended by Newman that there is no evidence that he intended to speak *ex cathedra*, and therefore his heresy does not invalidate the dogma of Papal infallibility.<sup>1</sup> It has also been suggested that the Pope did not understand the question, and that 'the unity which he asserted was not an identity, but a harmony';<sup>2</sup> but, be this as it may, he was condemned as a heretic by the sixth œcumenical Council, held at Constantinople in the year 680. This Council added to the dogma of Christ's person the decision that there were in him two natural wills and two natural energies, indivisibly, unchangeably, indissolubly, unconfusedly; and that the two natural wills were not opposed, but that the human will followed and was subject to the Divine.<sup>3</sup>

John of Damascus, in the eighth century, represented the Logos as the basis of the single personality of Christ, and added to the accepted dogma the doctrine of the 'communication of properties,'<sup>4</sup> which is defined as meaning that, on account of the identity of the subsistence,<sup>5</sup> each nature communicated its own properties to the other, and they interpenetrated one another.<sup>6</sup> In this way it was possible

<sup>1</sup> *A Letter addressed to his Grace the Duke of Norfolk on the occasion of Mr. Gladstone's recent Expostulation*, 1875, pp. 107 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Milman, *Latin Christianity*, II, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> The decision may be seen quoted at length in Michalcescu, *Die Bekenntnisse und die wichtigsten Glaubenszeugnisse der griechisch-orientalischen Kirche*, 1904, pp. 7 sqq.

<sup>4</sup> Ὁ τρόπος τῆς ἀντιδόσεως, *communicatio idiomatum*.

<sup>5</sup> Τῆς ὑποστάσεως.

<sup>6</sup> Τὴν εἰς ἀλλήλα αὐτῶν περιχώρησιν.



to affirm of Christ, 'Our God was seen upon the earth, and had intercourse with men ; and, this man is uncreated and passionless and uncircumscribed.'<sup>1</sup>

The rejection of one other error should be referred to. Towards the close of the eighth century some Spanish bishops maintained that the Son of God begotten before all time was such by nature, and not by grace ; but that he who was made from woman, made under the law, was the Son of God, not by kind, but by adoption, not by nature, but by grace. This view, which was practically a reassertion of Nestorianism, and was known as 'adoptianism,' was condemned by several synods.

We have only to add that the union of the two natures in one person is technically called the hypostatic union, and the process by which the Divine nature united itself with the human is known as the incarnation. The incarnation, according to the received dogma, was effected by the operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby the second person of the Trinity assumed human nature, and the God-Man was born from a virgin. In strictness, however, it is said that 'all the persons of the divine Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were the authors of this mystery ; since this rule of the Christian faith is to be maintained, that all things which God does external to himself among created things are common to the three persons, nor does one act more than another, or one without another.'<sup>2</sup>

It seems clear that a dogma which required more than

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Hagenbach, II, p. 268. This is clearly implied in the decisions of the Second Council of Constantinople, A.D. 553, which insists on the unity and sameness of the personality, so that the Logos endured sufferings by the flesh, and the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the holy Trinity (ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, εἷς τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος), thus identifying the historic man with the eternal God. Labbe, *Concilia*, Tom. vi. p. 207, γ' and δ'.

<sup>2</sup> *Cat. Rom.*, Pars I, De art. III, Cap. IV, § iv. This is asserted in the proceedings of the Fourth Lateran Council, A.D. 1215, 'Dei Filius Jesus Christus a tota Trinitate communiter incarnatus.' Labbe, *Concilia*, Tom. xiii. p. 929.

six hundred years to elaborate, and which was carried, point after point, by the voice of majorities amid the conflicts of contending bishops, and in some of its stages was forced upon the Church by imperial persecution, cannot be exempt from criticism, and accepted at once as the original and settled faith of Christendom. Nor can it claim exemption from the critic's tests on the plea that the truth which it states is a mystery with which human reason is not competent to deal; for the whole dogma is an attempt of reason to drag the secrets of God out of the region of mystery, and to define the nature of the union between God and Christ, which is acknowledged by the universal Christian consciousness, in statements as hard and precise as the propositions of Euclid. A deeper and more tender reverence than animated the general Councils may shrink from discussing or even speaking of some of the questions which the coarser grain of Greek theologians endeavoured to make plain to the understanding. It is from no love of dissecting Divine mysteries that I am driven into criticizing the current view; and in stating explicitly and firmly the reasons which make it impossible for me to accept that view, I wish to do so with all deference towards the multitudes of good and wise men who have held it.

Throughout the discussion we must bear in mind that the dogma in question makes Christianity entirely exceptional in the history of the world, and indeed of the universe. The hypostatic union at once lifts it into a region completely apart, with which other religions cannot have even the remotest affinity. The incarnation is regarded as a solitary event of cosmic significance, a miracle so stupendous that it can be accounted for only by the need of rescuing some portion of our race from the universal ruin and damnation which had fallen on mankind.<sup>1</sup> That this doctrine, if sin-

<sup>1</sup> I think anyone who reads carefully the dogmatic decisions of the Councils must admit that this is not an overstatement. To my great surprise Dr. Sanday, in a friendly notice of my Essex Hall Lecture (in the



cerely believed, would have a powerful, almost an overwhelming effect upon the heart and life is readily conceivable, and no doubt it has sometimes fed the purest fires of devotion ; but when we see the apparent deadness and apathy of the great mass of Christians, we can only conclude that these tremendous facts have for them no reality, and they are only supposed to believe because they have not faith enough to deny.

The doctrine of the Deity of Christ is so closely implicated with the doctrine of the Trinity that the former, in its orthodox form, cannot be maintained without the latter ; and accordingly the criticism passed on that doctrine is largely applicable to the present question. Nevertheless,

*Hibbert Journal*, I, p. 146), objects to my speaking of the ‘ distinction generally made, which represents Jesus as the Son of God in a totally different sense from that in which the term is applied to other men.’ This distinction used to be insisted on as against the Unitarians ; and the Unitarian heresy consisted in maintaining that the sonship of Jesus was unique, not in kind, but in degree. To hold the latter view was, according to Athanasius, *πανουργία* and other unpleasant things ; and he insists to satiety on the absolute distinction between him who was Son *φύσει* and *ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ θεοῦ* and those who, being *κτίσμα*, were sons only *θέσει* and *κατὰ χάριν* (see, for instance, *Epist. de Decretis Nic. Syn.*, 19 sq. ; *Orat. II, contra Arianos*, 59). If this absolute distinction is discarded, and Jesus is thought of as the Son of God through a Divine indwelling which may be ascribed, in however inferior a degree, to other men, the difference between our views disappears. But such a view still seems to me entirely subversive, not only of the later definitions, but of the Nicene theology. Dr. Sanday further objects to my speaking of ‘ a pre-existent being, who, prior to the incarnation, was perfectly distinct from Jesus,’ and says that ‘ no orthodox theologian would write in these terms.’ But surely no orthodox theologian would say that the second person of the Trinity was Jesus of Nazareth at the time of the creation. The constant statement that he ‘ became man ’ implies that he was not man prior to the incarnation ; and, on the other hand, it is only on account of the union of the two natures in one person through the incarnation, and the consequent *communicatio idiomatum*, that it is possible to speak of the pre-existence of Jesus. I suppose there are many modern refinements and modifications of the ancient doctrine ; but I am concerned with the authoritative dogmatic statements.

the dogma has so many features peculiar to itself, and it is so easily held in a loose and heretical way, that it must come under further and separate discussion.

Let us consider, first, the vastness of the demand made upon our faith by the main proposition. It is better to be quite frank, though I may be only betraying my own incompetence. It appears to me, then, that the central statement is intrinsically incredible, and what no reasonable man would believe if offered for his acceptance in regard to a man living at the present time. We look at distant scenes through a glorifying haze, and can believe that things happened in the far past which no one of competent understanding would believe if reported now. This is due partly to the creative power of imagination, and partly to a defect of imagination which prevents us from picturing these remote events as they would appear amid the familiar transactions of every day. Now, let us imagine a living man, with whom we are intimately acquainted, with whom we go about, and converse, and eat and drink; what evidence would convince us that this undoubted man was the eternal person through whom the universe was created, and that while he was sitting at our table, and teaching us wise and gracious lessons, he was at the same time sustaining the Milky Way, and controlling the destinies of innumerable worlds? If he made such a claim for himself, we should think that, however wise and good, he was on that point insane. If indeed he wrought some vast cosmic miracle, we might possibly be awed into belief. But if he made no such claim; if he wrought only some terrestrial wonders, such as were ascribed to ancient prophets; if he suffered from weariness and pain; if he constantly prayed, and habitually spoke of his dependence on his heavenly Father; if there were things which he declared he did not know, and he refused the title of good; we could only believe, as Peter did of Christ, that he was a man approved of God, and endowed with exceptional powers. But we can readily



conceive that he might have such weight and grandeur of character as to convince us that the spiritual communion which subsists between the soul and God was carried in him to an unexampled height, and that he was destined to be the greatest religious leader of mankind. No sublimity of act and character, however, could convince us that he transcended the possibilities of human nature, and was perfect God as well as perfect man. The main proposition, then, is so intrinsically incredible as to require proofs of quite exceptional cogency to justify our acceptance of it.

In the second place, then, we must ask, do such proofs exist? We are surely justified in supposing that, if such a prodigious fact as the hypostatic union ever took place, and the knowledge of it was essential to salvation, proofs of it would have been furnished which no candid mind could resist, and the doctrine would be stated in the Christian Scriptures with a clearness and constancy which could leave nothing to be desired. But this is notoriously not the case. It is impossible for us here to go step by step through the old Biblical controversy, and we must be content with general considerations. It cannot be pretended that the dogma in its completeness is stated anywhere in the New Testament. Indeed the very terms which are necessary to express it are not found. It has to be gathered by very doubtful inference from obscure intimations, which are supposed to be most easily explicable if we assume that the dogma was in existence. Even the central and imperfect statement that Christ was God in a supreme sense is only inferred from a few passages, where many learned and pious men have failed to discover it, while on the other hand Christ is so continually distinguished from God as to leave the impression that the writers never thought of identifying them. Hence, even if we could accept the old view of Biblical infallibility, we should feel that this doctrine at the best rested on a very slender and insecure basis, and that it could not possibly be the fundamental truth in the

Christian religion. But the old view of the Bible is confessedly untenable ; and therefore, even if the doctrine were clearly present in certain passages, we could not accept it on that sole authority, for it might be due to the philosophical speculations of the time. In fact we find in the New Testament different modes at least of expression in regard to Christ's person ; and the most exalted statements have a curious vagueness, and a speculative tinge, which deprive them of the precision and weight of dogmatic statements. This is sufficient to show that there was in the first age no fixed and explicit doctrine of the Deity of Christ which was universally accepted as the basis of Christianity. The truth of this statement may be more apparent if we contrast the supposed allusions to Christ's Deity with the assertion of his Messiahship, which is clear and universal.

Notwithstanding these indisputable facts, Professor Sanday affirms that 'no sooner had the Life of Jesus ended in apparent failure and shame than the great body of Christians—not an individual here and there, but the mass of the Church—passed over at once to the fixed belief that he was God.'<sup>1</sup> This is asserted without a particle of evidence, as though it were an undoubted fact ; and it is perhaps all the more likely on this account to be accepted without question by the reader. Dr. Sanday's candour and fairness are beyond suspicion ; and it is curious how differently different minds are affected by the same facts. For my own part, I believe that the evidence which exists is entirely opposed to his view, and that very many years passed away before the thought of such a doctrine entered any Christian mind.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Sanday, indeed, appeals, by way of illustrating the argument from Scripture, to I Thessalonians, the first extant New Testament writing, 'written probably about

<sup>1</sup> Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Article 'Jesus Christ,' p. 627.

<sup>2</sup> Not to cite other evidence at present, the fact that in the eucharistic prayers in the *Didache* Jesus is referred to simply as God's 'servant' (*παῖς*), seems to me conclusive against Dr. Sanday's unqualified statement.



A.D. 51—in any case not later than 53, or within the first quarter of a century after the ascension,’ and remarks on some of the phraseology which is there found. The highest claim which he makes is, not that Christ is identified with God, but that ‘the glorified Jesus is, as it were, bracketed with “God the Father.”’ This refers especially to the opening words, ‘To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.’ We have had occasion to remark before on this sort of conjunction of terms, and seen how little can be inferred dogmatically from it. Here, however, we may observe further that, if God and Christ are bracketed together, they are thereby distinguished from one another, and that the proper Trinitarian formula would be ‘To the church in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three persons and one God’; but surely every one must feel how utterly incongruous such an expression would be in the New Testament. That very high claims are there made on behalf of Christ no one questions; but then we may safely assert, what so far as I know has never been doubted, that the whole Church believed that Jesus was the Christ, and there is nothing in the Epistle to the Thessalonians that claims more for him than naturally belonged to the spiritualized and glorified Messiah. Even the Jews believed that their human Messiah was to be the vicegerent and representative of God upon earth. The question is not whether the Apostles ascribed great prerogatives to the risen Christ, but whether they thought that he possessed these by virtue of his eternal nature, or on the contrary God *made* him Lord and Christ, had *raised* him from the dead, had *exalted* him, had *glorified* him, had *appointed* him judge of the world, had *given* him a name above every name. This question is answered with perfect explicitness in the New Testament; and even in the Fourth Gospel, where we are repeatedly told that the highest Christian doctrine is unmistakably pronounced, Christ’s continual consciousness of

dependence on another than himself is most strongly marked. 'The Father *gave* to the Son to have life in himself'; 'I can from myself do nothing'<sup>1</sup>—these words express the pervading sentiment of the book.

Dr. Sanday, wishing to explain why so much doctrine is only implied, as he believes it is, and not stated, makes a remark which has a very serious bearing on apostolical teaching. He says, 'The Second Coming is the only point on which the Epistle can be said to contain direct and formal teaching. The other points are all assumed as something already known, not as imparted for the first time.' Now, the explicit teaching is that in the time of men then living Christ would come down from heaven with a shout, the dead in Christ would rise, and then those who were living, including Paul himself, would be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Not only does this statement wear the appearance of temporary Jewish thought, but we know that in fact these things never took place, and that Paul therefore was mistaken in this part of his explicit teaching. How, then, are we to be certain that all the rest of his Messianic thought was absolutely correct? May it not be necessary to understand some things in the spirit rather than in the letter? And may it not be that the kernel of spiritual truth which we have to extract from its perishing shell is something different from the Greek metaphysics?

Dr. Samuel G. Green, in his Essay, 'Deity and Humanity of Christ,' published in 'The Ancient Faith in Modern Light,' virtually abandons the old style of argument from proof-texts, as leading to subjective exegesis, and consequently uncertain results.<sup>2</sup> He accepts, however, as conclusive, not Christ's statements that he was God, for none such can be found, but his self-assertiveness. From a great religious genius 'Egoism disappears. To his disciples he will ever say, "follow not me, but the Supreme Good; be true and pure, not for my sake, but for the sake of that which is

<sup>1</sup> John v. 26, 30.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 165 sq.



infinite and eternal, take my words, not because I utter them, but because they are in themselves divine.”’ But Christ acted very differently. ‘He places his own personality always in the foreground: “Verily, verily, *I* say unto you”’; ‘Come unto Me, and I will give you rest’; ‘Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in heaven’; ‘He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me’; ‘No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.’ Dr. Green includes the baptismal formula at the end of Matthew; but this labours under too great critical suspicion to strengthen his argument. The stress lies on the general fact of Christ’s self-assertion, from which it is said to follow that there is no ‘escape from the old dilemma: *Aut Deus, aut homo non bonus.*’<sup>1</sup> Dr. Martineau adopts the same rule; but then he pushes it too far for Dr. Green’s purpose, for he says, in connexion with the Fourth Gospel, that ‘a being divine enough really to be “a second god” would be the last to think or say it.’<sup>2</sup> Thus, while one writer concludes that no good being but God could advance such self-assertive claims, the other thinks that no genuine God could be so self-conscious as to make them, and therefore rejects them as not authentic. I must confess that such artificial moral maxims, which are promulgated in order to support foregone conclusions, affect me very slightly; but as the argument is clearly put forward in perfectly good faith, and has often been relied upon, we must give it a few moments’ attention.

In the first place, the self-assertiveness of Jesus in the Synoptical Gospels, on which the chief stress is laid owing to the critical difficulties which affect the Fourth, is described in exaggerated terms. So far is Jesus from placing his own personality *always* in the foreground that there is a large proportion of his teaching in which there is no reference

<sup>1</sup> pp. 159 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> *The Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 448.

to himself whatever. To take only one example, of primary importance, the prayer which he delivered as a model to his disciples is not offered to himself, and contains no allusion to himself. Christians, apparently considering that this was due to a becoming modesty, have, in the name of orthodoxy, improved upon the model, and supplied the deficiencies of their teacher.

In the second place, the propriety of words, which are not evil in themselves, depends very largely upon circumstances ; and in order to arrive at a fair judgment we must consider the circumstances, and even try to imagine the tone in which the words were spoken. It does not follow, because it would be equally immodest and absurd for Dr. Green or me to say certain things, that Jesus was wrong in saying them, and could not have said them without some violation of humility. There is often more self-consciousness and vanity in disclaimers than in claims ; and if a man felt that a Divine burden was laid upon his soul, that he was called to be a teacher and leader of men, and that in a struggle with sin even unto death he must guide them into fresh fields of the spirit, he would be guilty of a false modesty if he did not speak simply and openly what was in his mind, and, lest men should think him vain, refused to summon them to his standard, and to require his followers, even for his sake, to prepare themselves for uttermost self-sacrifice. The rule for the philosopher in his study is not the rule for the prophet who has to guide men into new realms of spiritual life.

And now let us glance at the cases which are relied upon. In the Sermon on the Mount Christ calmly sets aside some of the ancient law with the words ‘but I say unto you.’<sup>1</sup> Not only was the Messiah confessedly entitled to such authority, but Jesus, without thinking of his Messianic call, may have relied purely on his own deeper inspiration. Lightfoot says these are ‘the words of one who refutes, or

<sup>1</sup> Ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, Matt. v. 22, etc.



determines a question, very frequently to be met with in the Hebrew writers.'<sup>1</sup> Philo once uses the very phrase, 'but I say unto thee,'<sup>2</sup> and it would be rather hard on this account to affirm that Philo was not a good man. The demand made by Christ that men should confess him, and love him more than father or mother, was made when he was showing the Apostles that they must be ready for every sacrifice, and that, if they would really follow him, and enter into the work of his life, they must leave all earthly things behind, and never be ashamed to acknowledge him. If anyone thinks it was presumptuous in Jesus to gather disciples round him, and demand their devotion to himself as well as to his cause, I can only say that the general conscience does not ratify such a judgment. Religions are not founded, or men led to victory, by abstractions, daintily taught by thinkers who are too modest to lead. The words of comfort, 'come unto me,' were spoken, from an irrepressible impulse of the heart, in an hour of spiritual exaltation, when the fulness of revealing light streamed in upon his soul, and in humble, yet triumphant thankfulness he received from his Father an overflowing knowledge of the deep things of God. He knew himself as the Son of God, and felt for a moment the loneliness of such knowledge; and then he remembered that men were ignorant of the Father, and it devolved on him, with the great consciousness of sonship which was given to him, to be the revealer. There is nothing in this scene that takes us beyond the humility and faithfulness and loving simplicity of a humanity most richly and wonderfully inspired.

If self-assertion is a sign that a man is not good, Paul must be, as he feared he might become, a reprobate. He had the assurance to write, 'Behold, I Paul say unto you,' as though that were sufficient authority to overthrow the most sacred claims of Judaism;<sup>3</sup> and again, 'Now I myself,

<sup>1</sup> *Horae Heb. et Talm.*, in loco.

<sup>2</sup> Ἐγὼ δέ σοι λέγω, *Quod det. pot. ins.* § 43, I. 221.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. v. 2.



Paul, exhort you.’<sup>1</sup> He admonishes the disciples to imitate him, or praises them for having done so.<sup>2</sup> He commends them for remembering him in all things;<sup>3</sup> and through a long passage he enumerates the qualities and achievements which entitled him to their confidence.<sup>4</sup> According to the rule Paul’s spiritual gifts must have been lamentably low, since he thought they were so high and said so; for surely a genuine Apostle would be the last to imagine or to boast that he was one. It is true, his claims are necessarily different from those of Christ, and cannot present an exact parallel, for the Apostle was not the Master; but the point of the argument lies, not in the character of the claims, but in the allegation that a good man could not make them. Paul’s language goes far beyond that which any ordinary man, however wise and good, would be entitled to use; and yet, for my part, I think that Paul was a good man, and spoke not from personal vanity, but from devotion to his cause, the deep-seated assurance of his divine mission, and the consciousness of an abounding spiritual insight.

We cannot follow here the long controversy about the Fourth Gospel, the authenticity of the sayings ascribed therein to Christ, and their meaning. It may be sufficient to say, in general, that the truth of those cited by Dr. Green is most cordially accepted by many who are quite unable to hold the dogma of Chalcedon. Reference must, however, be made to one text on which many rely, ‘The Father is greater than I.’<sup>5</sup> ‘How preposterous,’ it is said, ‘for any mere human being of our race to be gravely telling the world that God is superior to him!’<sup>6</sup> Preposterous indeed; but then that is not what Christ is said to have done. On the other hand it might be said, ‘How preposterous for one person of the Trinity to be gravely telling the world

<sup>1</sup> II Cor. x. 1. See also Eph. iii. 1, iv. 1; II Tim. i. 13, ii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. iv. 16, 17, xi. 1; Philip. iii. 17; I Thess. i. 6; II Thess. iii. 7, 9. See also Eph. iii. 2 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> I Cor. xi. 2.

<sup>4</sup> II Cor. xi., xii.

<sup>5</sup> John xiv. 28.

<sup>6</sup> p. 162.



that another person was superior to him, although they were really coequal and coeternal!’ But instead of this trifling, let us endeavour to recall the occasion, and to enter into the spirit of the scene. The words were not spoken to the world, but to the little band of sorrowing Apostles. They were full of trouble in the prospect of losing their beloved teacher, whom they believed to be the Messiah, the one appointed to establish the kingdom of God in Jerusalem, and to reign in righteousness over the nations. It seemed to them that all would be lost, and the disenchanted world return to its old dull routine, when their great leader was gone. But he bade them not be troubled, but rather rejoice, if they really loved him, reminding them that he was going to a greater than himself, whose cause he had served, and who would not let it perish, but would send his Spirit to abide with them ; and he himself, who had so loved the Father, would come in the might of that love to abide in their hearts. In this I see nothing preposterous, but words suited to the occasion. They may be, if you will, somewhat high-wrought and mystical ; but he who does not feel that the Divine idea in him, if realized, would bring him to something like this union with God has yet to learn the meaning of Christianity. And if we, ordinary men as we are, continually bore about in our hearts the thought, ‘The Father is greater than I,’ how much fretting and disappointment should we save ourselves, and how sweet a peace would dwell with us amid all our troubles.

We may illustrate the sentiment of this passage by referring to John x. 29, where, according to the *textus receptus*, Christ announces that God is greater than men in general—‘The Father who gave them to me is greater than all.’ I do not suppose anyone has ever thought this ‘preposterous,’ and therefore we may appeal to it, although critics think the true reading is ‘That which my Father has given unto me is greater than all.’<sup>1</sup> The reader may also be reminded

<sup>1</sup> The Revised Version retains the received text.



that St. John gravely informs the world that 'God is greater than our heart,'<sup>1</sup> and that the witness of God is greater than the witness of men.<sup>2</sup> A more modern example may be added. The Scottish Convention of Estates, in the time of the civil war in England, when explaining their reasons for sending help to the English Parliament, said, 'Our conscience, and God, who is greater than our conscience, beareth us record, that we aim altogether at the glory of God, peace of both nations, and honour of the King.'<sup>3</sup> Thus language, which can be made to look 'preposterous' when torn from its connexion, becomes not only sensible, but devout, when restored to its proper setting.

This appeal to Christ's self-assertion, then, has little convincing force ; and we may well ask, why, if he believed himself to be God, did he never say so, but leave his disciples to infer the truth from his apparent want of humility ? It would have been so easy to place the question beyond doubt, and compel every one to think either that he was deranged or that he was God. It is especially strange that when he directly asked the disciples what they thought of him, he seems to have been more than content with Peter's most imperfect answer.

The opinion of the Apostles is inferred by Dr. Green from a single expression. He says, 'It is the definition of the Christian character, to be "in Christ." Now, whatever the full significance of this deep, dark saying, it is plainly inapplicable to one's relation with his fellow-man. *I am in Paul, in John* ; how unmeaning would be the phrase !' I believe the phrase would not be at all unmeaning, if Paul or John were the supreme leader of the Christian movement, whose indwelling spirit in men were felt to be the essence of that movement ; and probably the writer who spoke of being 'baptized into Moses'<sup>4</sup> would not have hesitated,

<sup>1</sup> I John iii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> I John v. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Sir W. Scott in *The Legend of Montrose*, Chapter I.

<sup>4</sup> I Cor. x. 2.



if the occasion had arisen, to speak of the Jews as being 'in Moses.' We have seen before how perilous it is to build dogmas upon mere usages of language. There is no exact parallel to 'in Christ,' for there is no second Christ; but the preposition 'in' is used with such curious latitude in the New Testament that our translators are sometimes obliged to change it in order to avoid a phrase that in English would be unmeaning, or even ludicrous. For instance, Paul asks, 'What says the Scripture in Elijah?'<sup>1</sup> 'Shall I come unto you in a rod?'<sup>2</sup> and tells us that the Lord will descend from heaven 'in a trumpet.'<sup>3</sup> A few other expressions, connecting 'in' with persons, may be quoted as illustrations of Biblical usage:—'In Isaac shall thy seed be called';<sup>4</sup> 'I have you in my heart';<sup>5</sup> 'Ye are not straitened in us';<sup>6</sup> 'We shall be magnified in you';<sup>7</sup> 'They glorified God in me.'<sup>8</sup> Dr. J. H. Moulton observes that the preposition *ἐν* 'has become so much a maid-of-all-work that we cannot wonder at its ultimate disappearance, as too indeterminate.'<sup>9</sup>

The phrase in question, however, whether it originated with St. Paul, or, as Sanday and Headlam suggest, 'came in some way ultimately from our Lord Himself,'<sup>10</sup> is so predominantly Pauline, and used with such frequency by the Apostle, that it ought to be possible to determine its meaning with some exactness. Deissmann, in his exhaustive work, *Die neutestamentliche Formel 'in Christo Jesu' untersucht*, has proved that the preposition is used in its local sense; but I confess I am unable to follow him when he maintains that this local sense is literal, and not figurative, or, as I should rather express it, materialistic, and not spiritual. His own explanation is that Christians live "in" the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 2.<sup>2</sup> I Cor. iv. 21.<sup>3</sup> I Thess. iv. 16.<sup>4</sup> Rom. ix. 7; Heb. xi. 18.<sup>5</sup> Philip. i. 7.<sup>6</sup> II Cor. vi. 12.<sup>7</sup> II Cor. x. 15.<sup>8</sup> Gal. i. 24.<sup>9</sup> *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, I, Prolegomena, 1906, p. 103.<sup>10</sup> *Com. on Rom.* vi. 11, p. 161.

element "Christ," as they live in the air, or as fishes live in the water, or the roots of plants in the earth.<sup>1</sup> He justifies this through Paul's identification of the Lord with the Spirit, and his use of the phrase 'in the Spirit' as identical in meaning with the phrase 'in Christ.' He maintains that the use of 'in' in the former expression is obviously local, and that the pneumatic Christ was regarded by Paul as having a material body, however glorious and refined that body might be. He admits, however, that the literal meaning is not certain, though having the higher degree of probability, and contends that in any case the formula expresses the innermost communion of the Christian with the living Christ.<sup>2</sup> My first objection to the literal meaning is that it could not possibly signify this innermost communion. If the Spirit is a diffused matter, like the air, good and bad might be equally in it, as good and bad fishes are equally in the water. Another objection is that phrases which are clearly parallel to this do not admit of a materialistic explanation. Paul says, 'As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.'<sup>3</sup> We cannot regard Adam as a kind of extended atmosphere, and it is not a sufficient explanation to say that the first phrase is an imperfect imitation of the second. Surely the meaning must be that as by sharing the Adamic nature all die, so by sharing the Christ-nature all shall be made alive. Again, 'those in the law' (οἱ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ),<sup>4</sup> stand in contrast with 'those in Christ' (though the antithesis is not directly expressed in this passage); and this language must denote those who make the law the principle of their lives; and accordingly the contrasted phrase must signify those who find the principle of their lives in the spirit of Christ. Once more, Paul says, 'Ye are not in flesh, but in spirit, if God's Spirit dwells in you.'<sup>5</sup> This could not be true literally; for the Roman readers were still living in their flesh. The meaning must be that,

<sup>1</sup> p. 84.<sup>2</sup> p. 98.<sup>3</sup> I Cor. xv. 22.<sup>4</sup> Rom. iii. 19.<sup>5</sup> Rom. viii. 9.



in the case supposed, the principle of their lives was not carnal but spiritual. Accordingly, while accepting the local meaning, I cannot but regard spiritual locality as something quite distinct from material locality. This is one of the figures which express our spiritual relations far more vividly than any more precise description could do. We can live in Christ, and Christ can live in us, in a manner apprehended by faith, and spiritually understood, and not in the same manner as we are in the air at the same moment that the air is in us. With Dr. Green's conclusion from the phrase I am in hearty concurrence—'In a very important sense, Christ is Christianity';<sup>1</sup> yes, Christ, not dogmas about him; Christ in the heart, the heart resting in Christ, so full of faith and love as to find itself at home in God, a son reconciled and glorified.

While, however, the main features of the dogma are absent from the New Testament, and have to be constructed from very doubtful inferences, one part is expressly stated, namely the birth from a virgin. It would carry us far beyond due limits to discuss here the historical credibility of this event, and it must be sufficient to mention that the narratives of the infancy in Matthew and Luke are irreconcilable with one another; that the part which alleges a miraculous birth is confined to about two verses in Luke which have a suspicious appearance of interpolation; that in Matthew there are some curious readings in a few of the old authorities which are suggestive of a time when this portion of the Creed was not yet accepted; that both the genealogies trace the descent of Jesus through Joseph; and that there is no trace of the story in the rest of the New Testament. But supposing that this event is an historical, and not merely a symbolical fact, it cannot prove more than that the birth of the human Jesus was miraculous, unless we resort to ideas which it is impossible for a reverent mind to entertain.

Another weakness in the evidence is found in the history of the dogma. A doctrine which took six hundred years to

<sup>1</sup> p. 163.

get into proper shape, and which involved the repudiation of a general Council as a robber synod, and the condemnation of a Pope for heresy, cannot easily be regarded as part of a sacred deposit, known, if not to Christendom at large, at least to the ecclesiastical authorities from the first. The slow growth of opinion must be studied in the history of doctrine; but by way of illustration we may refer to some expressions of Justin Martyr, who was regarded as a pillar of orthodoxy, in addition to those which have been already quoted in connexion with the doctrine of the Trinity. In alluding to the appearance to Moses in the bush, which he explains as an appearance of the pre-existent Christ or Logos, he supports his interpretation by the following statement—‘No one with a particle of sense would venture to say that the Creator and Father of the universe, having left all the things above heaven, appeared in a little piece of earth.’<sup>1</sup> This implies a very marked degree of inferiority to God the Father on the part of the Logos. The latter is accordingly referred to as ‘serving the God who is above the world, above whom there is no other.’<sup>2</sup> Again, having spoken in exalted terms of the Father, he asks, ‘How then could he either speak to anyone, or be seen by anyone, or appear in a very minute portion of earth, when the people at Sinai could not behold even the glory of him who was sent by him . . . ? Neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, nor any other man saw the Father and unspeakable Lord of absolutely all things and of Christ himself; but they saw him who according to his [the Father’s] will was both a God, his Son, and an angel.’<sup>3</sup> Again, as a pre-existent God, Christ is described as ‘under the Creator of the universe.’<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Οὐ τὸν ποιητὴν τῶν ὅλων καὶ πατέρα, καταλιπόντα τὰ ὑπὲρ οὐρανὸν ἅπαντα, ἐν ὀλίγῳ γῆς μορίῳ πεφάνθαι πᾶς ὁστισοῦν, καὶ μικρὸν νοῦν ἔχων, τολμήσει εἰπεῖν. *Dial.* 60.

<sup>2</sup> Ὑπηρετοῦντα τῷ ὑπὲρ κόσμον θεῷ, ὑπὲρ ὃν ἄλλος οὐκ ἔστι. *Dial.* 60.

<sup>3</sup> *Dial.* 127.

<sup>4</sup> Ὑπὸ τὸν ποιητὴν τῶν ὅλων. *Dial.* 56. The MSS. read ὑπέρ, but the context proves this to be a blunder.



Thus Justin Martyr is so far from asserting the coequality of the second person of the Trinity with the Father, that he insists on its impossibility, and deduces his doctrine from the supposed necessity of some intermediate Divine being who was far inferior and subject to the supreme and ultimate source of being.

We must now proceed, in the fourth place, to some considerations which strongly influence my own mind, though I know not how they may affect others. Our view of the universe, and of the history of mankind, has been entirely changed since this doctrine was promulgated, and the two conceptions have consequently contracted very uneasy relations with one another. Formerly the little planet on which we dwell was the central body, constituting about half the known universe ; and the cosmic drama of providence was concerned with the fortunes of our race. Heaven was an encircling sphere, or rather series of spheres, not far removed from the earth, whither, on quitting these lower scenes, Christ ascended, and where, according to the Fourth Article of the Church of England, he sits with his flesh and bones until he return at the last day. Then too, the history of mankind was supposed to have lasted only between four and five thousand years ; and this period included the history of the entire universe, which existed chiefly for the sake of man. But now not only our planet, but the solar system, of which it is so small a member, is as a speck of sand in an immeasurable desert. The solid heaven has melted away into reaches of trackless space, whose vast distances can be expressed only in numbers which utterly baffle the imagination. Time has unfolded her lengthening scroll, and the period even of our earth goes back through millions of years. Civilization has revealed her buried monuments, which have completely altered our ideas of human history, and the primeval savage made the first rude beginnings of the arts many thousands of years before the Biblical Adam walked in Paradise. Into this universe, as we now

know it, the old theology seems to me to fit most uneasily. I know that time and space do not alter purely spiritual relations ; but in the dogma under discussion we are dealing, not with these, but with an absolutely miraculous and unique incarnation, the results of which extend through the entire range of the universe. We cannot help asking why our tiny sphere was selected for this amazing miracle ; why, if it was necessary for the salvation of mankind, it took place after such a vast period of human history had elapsed ; why, when at last the time came, it was so obscurely announced that to this day about two-thirds of the human race know nothing of it ; and why, among those who acknowledge it, it has borne so little fruit, leaving the mass of Christians little better, and many a great deal worse, than their neighbours, so that many parts of the history of Christendom are more like a carnival of Satan than a kingdom of God. Everything seems out of proportion, and the whole ecclesiastical scheme belongs to a picture of the universe which science has entirely obliterated. So real is this objection that some of the early Protestant theologians rejected the Copernican astronomy, and in more recent times Philippi, who could not do so, maintained that on account of the incarnation our earth had the chief place of dignity in the universe, and the stars were without inhabitants, and were created for the sake of the earth.<sup>1</sup> This position has lately been maintained, with a full consideration of the scientific evidence, by Dr. A. R. Wallace.<sup>2</sup> I cannot discuss the scientific arguments, which are full of fascination ; but has not the discovery of radium seriously weakened one of the most important, relating to the period of the sun's duration as a source of heat ? It is certainly difficult to believe that a universe which, though finite, is of such inconceivable magnitude, was necessary for the production of the human

<sup>1</sup> See Grimm, *Inst. The.*, p. 346, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Man's Place in the Universe. A Study of the Results of Scientific Research in Relation to the Unity or Plurality of Worlds*, 1903.



brain or other organ of intelligence, and that, apart from our little world, it consists of nothing but unconscious matter. Science, however, must determine, if it can determine, this question. Meanwhile our spiritual perspective is inevitably altered, and the problems opened up by our vision of incalculable ages are untouched by Dr. Wallace's arguments.

In connexion with this failure of the ecclesiastical scheme to exhibit results at all proportioned to its pretensions we may notice a popular argument which is often advanced on the other side. It may be presented in the words of Dr. Green, who states it with a grave courtesy. He says, 'One fact, uniformly and mournfully apparent in the annals of Unitarianism, is its absence of transforming and vitalizing power. It *does not convert*. This is simply the testimony of its adherents—their constant, sorrowful confession.'<sup>1</sup> I was not aware of such a constant confession on the part of Unitarians; but as this kind of argument is dragged into a doctrinal question, it is necessary to notice it.

In the first place, then, the statement, though I am sure it is made in perfectly good faith, is not true, and it is virtually contradicted in the next sentence, in which Dr. Green says, 'In many cases they are earnest, sincere, devout. They would spend and be spent, if they could only win men's souls to righteousness, purity, and love.' Now, as Unitarians are supposed to be born in that outer region where there is nothing but sin, how come they to possess such a Christian spirit as is here ascribed to them, if their religion does not convert? It is evident that Dr. Green regards their virtues as real, and not mere tinsel laid on by Satan to deceive the unwary, as orthodoxy, with genial charity and insight, has sometimes maintained. Indeed in my young days it was so fully recognized that Unitarians were not the fiends which by the hypothesis they ought to have been that a reason for this awkward fact had to be discovered, and it was said that the devil, being sure of

<sup>1</sup> p. 163, l. c.

them hereafter, did not think it worth while tempting them now. We may, however, leave these amenities of ancient controversies, and turn to more serious reflections. It is probably true that many Unitarians, as well as many Trinitarians, deeply conscious of the transforming and vitalizing force of Christianity in themselves, are surprised and sorrowful that it has not a greater influence in the world ; but this is far from being a confession that it does not convert—nay, it is an assertion that it does convert. Unitarians, again, have deliberately refrained from following the methods of revivalists, and may have been too sceptical about the value of sudden conversions ; and to some extent they have been hampered, and had their energies diverted, by the necessity for intellectual defence ; but because they prefer to work in quiet ways, and rely on steady influence, and do not blow a trumpet before them when they hold out a hand to a sinful brother, we are not to conclude that they have no saving grace, and that their labours in the abodes of misery and sin in our great cities have had no redeeming efficacy.

In the second place, the argument may be retorted with tenfold force. As we have seen, one of the most formidable objections to the whole ‘ orthodox ’ system is its miserable failure to redeem the world. For centuries it has had everything on its side, and ample opportunity for creating a paradise of God ; and many people find it quite impossible to believe that a miracle so stupendous as the incarnation could have been allowed to result in such a deplorable fiasco as is presented by Christendom. That Christianity, under every form, has produced beautiful and saintly characters, and that it is still working as a saving power in the world, is happily most true ; but the souls of saints are mere spots of light in a vast and dreary picture, while the crimes that have been committed in the name of Christianity, and often actually produced by the tenets which were held, thrust themselves upon the sight, and fill every heart that has



really been touched by the spirit of Christ with anguish and indignation. In short, the Saviour has been crucified on a cross of presumptuous metaphysics.

But lastly, it is unsafe to argue from practical results to theoretic truth; for although they have a real connexion, man is influenced by numerous agencies besides his speculative opinions, and the power of conversion lies far less in abstract truth than in the personal persuasion of a holy love. We must observe, moreover, that the power of moving great and indifferent multitudes by spiritual appeal is a very rare gift in any church, and it is not every one who holds Wesley's doctrines that can speak with Wesley's tongue.

One other objection to the established dogma must be noticed. It appears to me that it is unpresentable in thought, and therefore can be no real object of belief. By this statement, I must repeat, I do not mean that it is something mysterious, the mode of which is beyond human comprehension, but that the several propositions constituting the dogma present no coherent meaning, and cannot be all believed at the same time. The controversy has, in modern times, turned almost exclusively on the proposition that Christ is God. This is a clear statement, which may be accepted or rejected; but it is a very small part of the ecclesiastical dogma, and, if put forward as the whole of it, is as heretical as the opposite assertion that he was simply man. The essence of the doctrine is found in the hypostatic union, and here it is that the lines of thought become so blurred as to exhibit a confused and unmeaning picture to the mind. I speak of course only for myself; for powerful thinkers seem to have been quite unconscious of this perplexity. But let us view the exact point of the difficulty. The fundamental proposition is that Christ had two complete natures, the human and the Divine. The essence of each of these two natures is personality, the Divine nature being purely personal, the human nature having in addition a

material body. Considered apart from their union, then, there are two persons ; and if you were to obliterate the personality of the human nature you would mutilate that nature, and it would be no longer complete. Instead, therefore, of saying that two natures were united, we may say that two persons were united ; and, as it is heresy to say that the two natures were fused together, so as to make a third nature different from either, we must suppose that these two persons remain in indestructible entirety, as is indeed expressly declared by the definition of Chalcedon, 'the same perfect in deity, the same perfect in humanity.'<sup>1</sup> Accordingly the dogma declares that Christ had two wills, the human and the Divine ; or, in other words, that he was two persons, for will is a characteristic mark of personality. But this is heresy ; and we shall forfeit our salvation if we say that he was more than one person. If, in order to escape this difficulty, you say that the personality resided in the Divine nature, you destroy the human nature ; for an apparent man without personality is not a man at all. The dogma, therefore, appears to be one of which you may believe the several parts at different times, but which it is impossible to believe all at once ; for in asserting one part you are denying another. It follows that for me (I speak not for others) to affirm my belief that the two complete and distinct natures were united in one person would not be to accept a sublime mystery, but to make an assertion which is absolutely destitute of meaning, being tantamount to saying that Christ was at one and the same time two persons and only one person. Such are the subtleties on which Christian theologians, in utter disregard of the teachings of their Master, have made salvation to depend.

We may refer here to a curious doctrine put forward in modern times by some theologians who contrive to maintain a reputation for orthodoxy. I allude to the doctrine of

<sup>1</sup> Τέλειον τὸν αὐτὸν ἐν θεότητι, τέλειον τὸν αὐτὸν ἐν ἀνθρωπότητι.



Kenosis (emptying).<sup>1</sup> The signs of human limitation in the Christ of the Gospels are too obvious to be denied, and it is admitted that there were certain things, such as the time of the second advent and the authorship of some of the books of the Old Testament, which he did not know, and that he accepted one or more popular errors. This limitation seems inconsistent with his Deity ; and in order to explain it the doctrine of Kenosis has been invented. This word is derived from Philippians ii. 7, where we read that Christ 'emptied himself,'<sup>2</sup> and this is explained as meaning that he voluntarily laid aside his omniscience when he became incarnate. One German theologian, indeed, Gess, goes so far as to maintain that, when the Logos became incarnate, his actual Deity was reduced to a mere potentiality, and, having even laid aside his self-consciousness, he was, during his residence on earth, not only without the relative attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, but even without his eternal and essential holiness, truth, and love.<sup>3</sup> Other advocates of Kenosis, however, do not go so far. Dr. Sanday applies it to the records of demoniacal possession. 'There can be no doubt,' he says, 'that Jesus himself shared, broadly speaking, the views of His contemporaries in regard to these cases'; and he explains this by adding, 'There was a certain circle of ideas which Jesus accepted in becoming man in the same way in which he accepted a particular language with its grammar and vocabulary.'<sup>4</sup> Before proceeding further we may notice how incorrect is the analogy which is here introduced. The adoption of an innocent practice, such as the use of a language different from your

<sup>1</sup> Some account of this is given by Dr. Green in the Essay already mentioned. He frankly admits the limitations of Christ's power and knowledge, while professing to retain the dogma of the two natures in one person.

<sup>2</sup> ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε.

<sup>3</sup> See Nitzsch, *Dogmatik*, p. 481.

<sup>4</sup> Hastings' *Dict. of the Bible*, Art. 'Jesus Christ,' p. 624. Does Dr. Sanday really mean that the Logos bore the name of Jesus before the incarnation?

own, is an acquisition instead of a self-emptying, and bears no resemblance to the acceptance of, and honest belief in, an idea which you know to be false. The one lies within the range of voluntary choice; the other would be, at least to a man, simply impossible. This doctrine, however, which has been invented in order to save a tottering orthodoxy, is rank heresy; for the Council of Chalcedon, as we have seen, pronounced Christ to be perfect, or complete, in Deity,<sup>1</sup> which he certainly was not if the second person of the Trinity made himself imperfect when he became incarnate. At an earlier time Athanasius was quite explicit upon this subject. He says, 'The flesh did not bring ignominy to the Logos, God forbid, but rather the former was glorified by the latter, nor when the Son who was in the form of God assumed the form of a slave did he suffer diminution of his Deity.'<sup>2</sup> Augustine is equally decisive. He speaks of the Son as 'remaining indeed in his Divinity, and not withdrawing from the Father, nor in anything changed by the assumption of man.'<sup>3</sup> Anselm, at a later time, expressly rejects this idea of Kenosis, and supplies what seems a conclusive argument against it. He says, 'The assumption of man into the unity of the person of God will not be made except wisely by the supreme wisdom, and consequently he will not assume in man what is in no respect useful, but very injurious to the work which the same man is to do. For ignorance would be useful to him for nothing, but injurious for many things: for how, without immeasurable wisdom, shall he do so many and so great works as he is to do? Or how shall men believe him, if they know that he is ignorant? If, however, they do not know, for what will that ignorance be useful to him?'

<sup>1</sup> Τέλειος ἐν θεότητι.

<sup>2</sup> Οὐ γὰρ ἀδοξίαν ἤνεγκεν ἡ σὰρξ τῷ λόγῳ, μὴ γένοιτο, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον αὕτη δεδόξασται παρ' αὐτοῦ, οὐδὲ ἐπειδὴ δούλου μορφὴν ἀνέλαβεν ὁ ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων υἱός, ἡλαττώθη τῆς θεότητος. *Epistola ad Adelphium*, 4.

<sup>3</sup> 'Manens quidem in divinitate sua, et non recedens a Patre, nec in aliquo mutatus, assumendo tamen hominem.' *De catech. rudibus*, xxvi. 9.



The argument proceeds to say that even in infancy he cannot be ignorant ; for from the moment when he became man he was always full of God, and hence was never without his power and wisdom.<sup>1</sup> Thomas Aquinas more plainly denies that there was ignorance even in the human nature of Christ ; for the fulness of grace excluded ignorance as well as sin.<sup>2</sup> This reasoning seems unanswerable ; and even if we could admit the possibility of God's relinquishing his own eternal attributes, we cannot suppose that in becoming incarnate he would renounce the very attribute which would be most essential to him as a teacher of truth. It is not only Catholic theology which condemns the doctrine of Kenosis. The Formula of Concord expressly denies that, even according to his human nature, Christ's knowledge was limited, and that he was incapable of having omnipotence and other attributes of the Divine nature.<sup>3</sup> We must add that a God who has laid aside his Divine attributes has ceased to be God, so that the doctrine amounts to no more than this, that there was in Christ a special, though imperfect, manifestation of the Divine.

We must pass now to a different and more congenial order of reflection.<sup>4</sup> If there is no authoritative dogmatic revelation, and we find ourselves unable to accept the decisions of the Greek theologians, we must construct our Christology from the facts of Christian experience or of Christian consciousness. Christianity nurtures a peculiar kind of spiritual life, which bears a certain relation to Jesus Christ ; and this life or spirit contains implicitly certain truths which it is the business of the Christian theologian to draw forth and express in intellectual form. This is no easy task, and in the interpretation of our deepest consciousness, and

<sup>1</sup> *Cur Deus homo*, lib. II, xiii.      <sup>2</sup> *Summa theo.*, Pars III, Qu. xv. Art. iii.

<sup>3</sup> *Epitome*, Art. viii. *Negativa* §§ 17-20.

<sup>4</sup> The line of thought here followed, respecting the person of Christ, has been already given to the public, in different words, in my *Essex Hall Lecture*, 'Some Thoughts on Christology,' 1902.

the endeavour to present its contents in the shape of objective truth, the greatest care is necessary ; for there is a strong and natural tendency to confuse the experience itself with the intellectual conceptions which have been early implanted in our minds and associated with our religion. Attempts have been made to establish the Deity of Christ on the basis of immediate experience, and to show that Christians have a direct consciousness of 'the living Christ,' quite apart from the historical records of his earthly sojourn. This argument has been very skilfully presented by the late Dr. Dale,<sup>1</sup> but appears to me to be completely fallacious. The reality of the experiences I admit as fully as Dr. Dale, and have endeavoured to prove, in the earlier part of this work, that they point to a Source higher than ourselves. But they have no power whatever to prove the existence of an incarnate God hypostatically united for ever to human nature or to present as an historical reality a figure identical with that of Jesus exhibited in the four Gospels. These ideas are not part of the experience, but only suggestions awakened by association in minds already possessed with them. To take the strongest instance, the fact that prayer to Christ brings peace of heart or strength of will cannot prove that it is Christ personally who answers the prayer ; for it may be that God answers all sincere prayer, however imperfect or erroneous may be the form in which it is offered. Can we doubt that the pious heathen received some spiritual gift in response to his prayers ? We know that at the present day numbers of men who address their prayers, not to Christ, but to the Father are quite as familiar as the most orthodox believer with the experience described by Dr. Dale. Indeed the fundamental notion of an orthodoxy, that spiritual blessings are confined to those who hold certain dogmatic opinions, is pure delusion ; and therefore our consciousness of spiritual blessings cannot prove that the opinions in which we have been nurtured are necessarily correct, although from

<sup>1</sup> *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels.*



lifelong habit they press themselves on our thought as the natural interpretation of our religious experience.<sup>1</sup> Now, in the case of Christians of every school, their religious experiences are throughout directed and coloured by their faith in Christ. It is in his spirit that prayers are offered ; it is to God conceived through the image of graciousness and forgiving love presented to the world in Christ that they are addressed ; it is in his benediction of peace and pardon that the answer comes. It is true, as Dr. Dale says, that men have ‘ found God in him.’<sup>2</sup> But then men have found God in nature without becoming pantheists ; and many have found God in some blessed soul that no one has ever deified. To find God in him and to find that he is God are two totally different things. Bearing in mind, then, these precautions, let us endeavour to analyse with some precision the impression which he has made upon Christendom, and then to interpret the meaning of this impression. It contains several elements, which by their varying effect on different minds might give rise to many shades of doctrine.

The earliest impression which he made upon those who personally knew and heard him was that he was a prophet, who spoke with an immediate, God-given authority, and not as the scribes, who borrowed their teachings from the records of an ancient inspiration. We are told that the people ‘ glorified God, saying that a great prophet has risen up among us, and that God has visited his people,’<sup>3</sup> and that ‘ the multitudes were astonished at his teaching.’<sup>4</sup> After his death two of his disciples are said to have described him as ‘ a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.’<sup>5</sup> The passage of the Old Testament in which it is related that Moses told the fathers that God would

<sup>1</sup> See an interesting passage quoted from Jonathan Edwards by Professor James in his *Gifford Lectures*, p. 200, note 2. Speaking of conversion, he says, ‘ What they have experienced is insensibly strained, so as to bring it to an exact conformity to the scheme already established in their minds.’

<sup>2</sup> p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Luke vii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. vii. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Luke xxiv. 19.

raise up a prophet from among their brethren is applied to him.<sup>1</sup> In accordance with this view he is frequently addressed as 'teacher' in the Gospels, as though teaching were his one characteristic function.<sup>2</sup> As a prophet was empowered by God to teach, he is spoken of as God's 'servant Jesus,' or as his 'holy servant Jesus,' whom he had anointed.<sup>3</sup> This view of him has remained permanently in the Church. The Catechismus Romanus says that 'Jesus Christ was a supreme prophet and master,<sup>4</sup> who taught us the will of God, and from whose teaching the world has received knowledge of the heavenly Father.'<sup>5</sup>

In this connexion a question of great importance arises. Some would be content to rest here, and to attach such superlative excellence to the thing taught as to be willing to lose the teacher in his lesson. Once a truth is known, it is said, it matters not, except as a piece of historical information, who first promulgated it. Theodore Parker went so far as to say that 'If Christianity be true at all, it would be just as true if Herod or Catiline had taught it.'<sup>6</sup> The doctrine of gravitation, when once it is known, is received on its own evidence, and it is not necessary to learn anything about Newton. He might be utterly forgotten, or he might have been a bad man, and yet the benefit of his labours would remain absolutely unimpaired. So, it is said, Jesus might be entirely forgotten, or even have 'had never so many moral deficiencies,'<sup>7</sup> and nevertheless Christianity would

<sup>1</sup> Acts iii. 22, vii. 37.

<sup>2</sup> The title of διδάσκαλος is applied to him repeatedly in each of the Gospels, more than forty times in all. This fact is concealed by the usual English rendering, 'Master.'

<sup>3</sup> Acts iii. 13, 26, iv. 27.

<sup>4</sup> *Magister*.

<sup>5</sup> Pars I, Cap. iii. § 11. In the *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1906, there is an interesting article on 'Jesus the Prophet,' by Professor Kennett, indicating points in which Jesus resembled the ancient Prophets.

<sup>6</sup> *A Discourse of Matters pertaining to Religion*, pp. 157 sq., Miss Cobbe's edition.

<sup>7</sup> Parker, l. c.



remain, its truth being accepted, not on the authority of its teacher, but on the ground of its own rational truth. There seems some reason in this, and yet to the general Christian heart it must appear a cold and repellent view. Can we justify this feeling, or is it a mere prejudice? This question we must attempt to answer.

First, let me say that in treating as defective the opinion which is under consideration I must not be supposed to cast any slur upon the men who hold it. It has been intimately associated with an ideal which is as old as Christendom. The disciple is to be as his Master, having the same direct and intimate communion with God; he is to be transfigured into the same image; the world is to rejoice in the manifestation of the sons of God; and then the Son will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all. If God anointed Jesus with holy Spirit and power, he also 'anointed us, . . . and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.'<sup>1</sup> Christians 'have an anointing from the Holy One,' and 'know all things'; and 'the anointing . . . abideth in them,' and they 'need not that anyone teach' them.<sup>2</sup> If anyone, with sincere self-knowledge, feel that it is so with him, he is already perfect, and the doctrine founded on this experience is for him adequate and complete. But to most of us these things are ideals, and we count not ourselves to have attained. The earnest of the Spirit is indeed within; but it is not yet the full-orbed light that knows no setting. The words in Christ's prayer, as recorded in the Fourth Gospel, describe a wide experience. There is the careless world, with no knowledge of the righteous Father. The exalted Son of God knows him, for he lives in him, and bears about the abiding consciousness of God in his heart. The disciple, with spiritual discernment half awakened, recognizes in Jesus the glory of Divine love which has been given him, and, knowing that God has sent him, aspires to the reception and indwelling of the same love.

<sup>1</sup> II Cor. i. 21 sq.

<sup>2</sup> I John ii. 20, 27.



For ordinary Christians, then, the teaching is inseparable from the prophet who taught it. He has passed into their religion, and become an object of religious veneration and love ; and that gracious figure, with his words and deeds of mercy, with his triumphs and his sorrows, with his love obedient unto death and victorious over it, fills a larger space in their memory, and a holier shrine in their hearts, than the substance of his teaching, as it might be expressed in formal propositions, and taught like some lesson in science. It is the peculiarity of Christian discipleship that it is not obedience to a law, however sacred, or the acceptance of a theology, however true, but the impress of a Spirit and a communion of Love ; and if that blessed image which has dwelt as a redeeming power in the heart of Christendom were to fade out of the memory, no teaching could take its place as an uplifting power, for the kindling touch of sympathy and love would be wanting.

Again, we must observe that spiritual truth is not like scientific truth, apprehended by a pure process of the intellect. Truth of the latter kind is always equally clear and equally certain ; but moral and spiritual truth comes rather in visions, which now may glow with noonday splendour, and again become shadowy and evanescent ; and such truth is communicated, not through propositions and proofs, such as Herod or Catiline might be equal to, but only through its living power in a soul in which it dwells, and which is therefore able to touch the eyes of our souls, and clear them from the film that hides from us the deep things of God. You tell us, for instance, that love is of God, and that we must love our brethren. But what is love ? To know it, we must see it and feel it ; and when we kneel before the cross, we know it, and, perceiving at the same time our own emptiness and need, we find that the commandment to love is turned into a quickening spirit.

Is then the experience satisfied if to the prophet and teacher we add the example of moral excellence ? The



impression of Christ's exalted character extends beyond the limits of his avowed followers. We need not attempt here to draw forth the various elements which combined to form the harmonious and beautiful picture. It is sufficient to say that he left on those who knew him best an impression of unequalled holiness and love, of devout submission to the Divine will, and of gracious tenderness towards the repentant sinner. In all these things he left us an example, that we should follow his steps.<sup>1</sup> There is undoubtedly a high power in example, provided it be the example of one whom we honour. But if this condition be not included, and example be merely a formal pattern, which we may copy if we will, then it becomes at best a cold light to guide our steps in safety, if we happen to be wise enough to follow it. Even in this lower sense example may be of great value, and there are many things in which the example of Christ approves itself to our conscience, and gives us wholesome direction upon the path of duty. But if we paused here, we should feel that our description of Christian experience was sadly inadequate. Christ's life, in its outward aspects, is not a model which men in general can usefully imitate. We have our various gifts and callings, and the pursuits and surroundings of most men must be utterly unlike those of Christ. We must follow him, then, not in the letter, but in the spirit; and a spiritual example can be only spiritually discerned, and we cannot use it, as we might a picture or a statue, to reproduce in some sort of more or less perfect copy.

We must pass on, then, to a deeper experience than that which connects us with the teacher and example. Jesus is, to the heart that loves him, 'a quickening spirit,' one who forms the interior life, and fills it with an abounding energy, or, perhaps, we should rather say, the communicator of life,

<sup>1</sup> I Pet. ii. 21. See also Matt. xx. 28; John xiii. 15, 34, xv. 12; Rom. xv. 3; I Cor. xi. 1; II Cor. viii. 9; Eph. v. 2; Philip. ii. 5; Col. iii. 13; I Tim. vi. 13; I Pet. iii. 17 sq.; I John ii. 6, iii. 3, 7, 16, iv. 17.

who sends a conscious thrill pulsating through the sleeping soul. The idea of life in connexion with Christ is of such frequent occurrence in the writings of Paul and John that it is hardly necessary to refer to particular passages. It evidently expresses what to them was a heart-felt reality. They had 'passed out of death into life.'<sup>1</sup> They had seen 'the life,' and through that vision had entered into 'fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.'<sup>2</sup> Paul felt that his old self had been 'crucified with Christ,' and it was no longer he that lived, but Christ that lived in him.<sup>3</sup> He was anxious that Christ should be formed in his disciples,<sup>4</sup> and should dwell in their hearts by faith.<sup>5</sup> Such language expresses an abounding sense of a new 'spirit of life' which had come to them in Christ, filling them with an unexpected love and holy self-devotion, which took possession of them, driving out the old selfishness and pride and worldliness, and converting their belief in God into a consciousness of his living touch upon the soul. Now, this experience is repeated through the ages, and is, in numberless cases, as vivid and coercive to-day as it was eighteen centuries ago.

But, it may be said, we are here falling into the error which has been pointed out, of misinterpreting what is purely a Divine experience, unconditioned by past history, and it is only through a confusion of thought that we ascribe it to the influence of Jesus. Knowing the danger, let us tread warily. First, then, it seems to be as certain a fact as anything in the past can be, that Jesus made a profound personal impression upon his immediate disciples, and that this impression, though largely conveyed through the instrumentality of teaching, was something quite apart from the mere matter of his teaching. If some comfortable and self-satisfied sophist had said the same things, he would not have touched the heart of the world. It is the personal force behind, the native power of commanding men, that drives

<sup>1</sup> I John iii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> I John i. 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. iv. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. iii. 17.



teaching home ; and if words of grace and truth lingered in the ears of the multitude after they had listened to one of Christ's discourses, it was the tone and look that made the words live, and wakened in the hearers the sleeping energy of emotion and conviction. Again, it will hardly be denied that Jesus brought into the world a new ideal of life, that of a holy and loving Son of God, with all the fulness of meaning that these words contain. The ideal is still there, it may be in fragmentary form, and with mists of legend hanging about it, but still unmistakable in its beauty and purity, shining as a heavenly light over this dark and troubled world. Something too of the old personal power lingers in the records ; and as we read, a great love towards him leaps up, and the inward life of that master-spirit lays its impress upon the heart.

There is another source of influence which must be traced to him. The life passed from soul to soul, making a community of brethren, bound to one another in holy fellowship, through the pervasive energy of the same spirit ; and through all the degradation and corruption of a Church become worldly, the heavenly pattern has never been lost ; but the spirit of the crucified still broods over the moral chaos, and the eternal word which spoke in Christ still breathes from human lips and shines in human deeds. And so there is a permanent Christ-life in the world, a life which has come down through a long line of saints, in whom it has been continually renewed from the original source ; and into this life we can enter, losing in its pure flood the cares and sorrows and sins of self. Thus Christ remains for us 'a quickening spirit' ; not only a wise teacher and holy example outside us, but an indwelling life, which freely shapes itself to meet the conditions of the time, and may utter new teachings, and perform new deeds, but always retains unaltered at the centre the sacred ideal of perfect Sonship to God.

And now we come to a profound experience, which is not indeed equally felt by all, but is surely characteristic of

Christendom as a whole. God has been brought in Christ closer to the souls of men, or, to speak perhaps more correctly, his constant nearness to them has come more distinctly into consciousness, and taken strong hold upon their faith. In seeing Christ they have seen the Father ; and where discipleship has been true and fervent, they have lived in an exalted sense of Divine communion, wholly different in kind from the belief in God which they had derived from other sources. The perception of this difference naturally loses much of its clearness, or perhaps vanishes altogether, in those who have been imbued with the Christian spirit from their earliest years ; but among the first disciples the newly felt relation to God was so vivid that it marked them off from the surrounding world. They were of God ; their fellowship was with him ; their citizenship was in heaven. And among those of a later time there have been multitudes to whom for a long period Christianity has been something conventional, a thing for which perhaps they would have been willing to fight and die, but the inner meaning of which has been hidden from their eyes ; and then suddenly a Divine light has shone into their souls from him, and the heavens have seemed opened once more to human faith and aspiration. This experience is closely connected with what we have laid down as the ideal of humanity. Father and Son are correlative terms ; and just in proportion as any man approaches the ideal of Divine Sonship, he must throw light upon both terms of the relation. Without considering at present whether Jesus has completely realized that ideal or not, we may say that he has at least impressed it upon the world, and stands before the eyes of men as its representative ; and hence it is that in seeing into his spirit we look at the same time into the deep things of God.

It is chiefly when the sense of sin and of spiritual desolation is ready to spring into life that this experience reaches its clearest consciousness. At such times men seem to hear in the tender pleadings of Christ the voice of God himself



calling them to a new life of faith and righteousness. This conviction of a Divine call acts powerfully upon their moral life, and rends the veil which hid the depths of their own spiritual being; and thenceforward God, as manifested in Christ, seems ever with them, and his word in their own conscience and heart becomes articulate, and is revered as the admonition of a Divine guide and counsellor along their daily walk. But, above all, a sense is awakened of God's forgiving and saving love, and a blessed light steals into the darkness of self-despair. In Christ the love of heaven has been brought down to earth; the love of God has been shed abroad in the hearts of men, and multitudes have rested in it, and found there the only spring of true and eternal life.

Such, then, are the experiences on which our Christology must rest. It is chiefly from those last described that the ecclesiastical dogma has been gradually developed; but they may perhaps be susceptible of a different interpretation, which will be more consonant with the present state of our knowledge and thought, and it is certain that they may and do arise independently of the dogma. The grand spiritual impression which Christ has made upon his disciples belongs to Christendom: the doctrine which seeks to explain this varies its form according to the school of theology in which it is framed. We must remember that the religious experience is the vital thing, and that the disputatious opinions, under which it has been so often smothered, are not essential. In conducting our investigation we may conveniently inquire into the meaning of the terms which are most commonly in use, and which are repeatedly employed in the earliest records of Christianity.

The oldest Christian confession declared that Jesus was the Christ. The word Christ is of course a figurative expression, denoting one who was, as it were, anointed by God, like a king or a priest, for the fulfilment of a particular function, and is properly applicable therefore only to the

human and historical Jesus, the man approved of God, and chosen for a certain purpose. It was originally connected with a number of ideas which have been dissipated by the facts of history. A Messiah was expected by the Jews; and the Messianic idea in its full development is a piece of Jewish mythology, involving a fight with Antichrist, the submission of the Gentiles, the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, and a glorious reign in Jerusalem. Some of these obsolete notions were inevitably mingled with the earliest confession of Christian faith, and there must have been keen disappointment when the first generation had passed away, and no sign of the Son of Man had appeared in the sky. The Church, indeed, has for the most part only postponed the fulfilment of the primitive expectations, and has accepted as Divine revelation the wild visions that shaped themselves in the despairing dreams of Judaism. But these apocalyptic fancies are only a temporary form of the spiritual longing for the establishment of a kingdom of God and the final triumph of righteousness; and while the latter enters deeply into the heart of Christian faith, the former belong to the imagination, which, borrowing from the modes of thought of any given time, loves to exhibit the spiritual idea in a definite picture. We must strip off the mythology if we wish to reach the permanent truth which lies at the heart of the Messianic idea. The word 'Christ,' consecrated, as it has been, by so many centuries of usage, may serve to represent to us this truth. Let us endeavour to detect its essential meaning.

First, it reminds us that the appearance of Jesus in the world was providential. He was not merely the product of his time, expressive of a random drift in the affairs of men, the largest bubble, as it were, on the stream of events, which would have flowed on just as certainly and strongly without bubbles. It seems clear from the brief records of his life that he was conscious of a Divine mission which he was bound to fulfil, that he believed himself to have been sent into the



world to bear witness to a higher truth than that which was generally taught, and to bring men into a nearer and more spiritual relation to God than that which was commonly recognized. And historically it was even so. He brought a new Divine power into human society, and introduced a new ideal of life, which had its root in the sense of immediate communion between the soul and God. From this point of view he was the elect man, anointed to manifest in the world the eternal life, into which all men are called to enter. But his confidence in his Divine mission does not set him apart as absolutely exceptional among men. He was not the first or the last to feel that his calling in life was of Divine appointment. In this respect he reveals, or permanently illustrates, or drives home into human consciousness the universal truth that the affairs of men are under a providential guidance, and that every man, however lowly, has his mission—not to do his own will, but to discharge worthily the tasks for which God has sent him into the world. The title 'Christ,' however, seems to claim for him a solitary place, and this must be found in the special character of his mission as the founder of a religion truly universal and spiritual, and in the power and purity with which he fulfilled what he felt to be laid upon him as a Divine command.

Again, the title 'Christ' reminds us that he was the consummate perfection of Jewish inspiration. He completed that long and wonderful history of religious growth, summing up in himself all its highest and most spiritual truth, while discarding as unessential all those elements that were merely national and temporary. In this sense he fulfilled the grandest anticipations of Hebrew prophecy, embodying the Divine Spirit which touched the lips of Isaiah or Jeremiah. But he cast off the narrowness and intolerance by which that spirit had been so often disfigured, and stood forth as the Son of Man, appealing to the universal heart in the name of the universal Father.

Lastly, the term 'Christ' tells us that he was the founder of a kingdom of God, not indeed a Jewish theocracy or other visible empire, with the nations of the world cringing at his feet, but of a kingdom that comes not with observation, a reign of righteousness and truth established in the souls of men, who render the spiritual homage of a holy and devout love to their invisible king.

The title 'Lord' contains an acknowledgment of superiority, but expresses rather our reverent sense of his spiritual greatness, and of our own discipleship, than a servile submission to an external authority. Dr. Martineau objected strongly to the use of this term, because he thought it implied quite a false moral relation, reducing men to the condition of slaves, with no conscience, judgment, or will of their own, and that this relation of master and slave was denoted by its primitive use. It is quite true that in the New Testament Christ's disciples are several times spoken of as slaves,<sup>1</sup> while Jesus himself is called Lord so frequently that it is needless to refer to particular passages. But this usage does not necessarily imply a really servile relation. The word translated 'Lord'<sup>2</sup> had become a title of respect, and was used in addressing a stranger, as we see in John xii. 21, where Philip is accosted as 'Lord'; and the woman of Samaria salutes Christ as 'Lord' before she has any suspicion that he is a prophet—facts which our translators have carefully concealed by rendering the word 'Sir.'<sup>3</sup> The word 'slave' was the correlative term, and would naturally be used in a figurative sense to express humility and deference. No man was more strenuously opposed than Paul to the moral and spiritual servitude which Dr. Martineau

<sup>1</sup> Δοῦλοι, Rom. i. 1; I Cor. vii. 22; Gal. i. 10; Eph. vi. 6; Philip. i. 1; Col. iv. 12; II Tim. ii. 24 (where κυρίου may perhaps refer to God); James i. 1; II Pet. i. 1; Jude 1; Rev. ii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Κύριος.

<sup>3</sup> Our Revisers put 'Or, Lord' in the margin in the case of the Samaritan woman, but not in the instance of the address to Philip.



deprecates. 'Ye did not receive,' he says, 'the spirit of bondage';<sup>1</sup> 'Thou art no longer a slave, but a son';<sup>2</sup> 'Christ made us free; . . . be not involved again in a yoke of bondage.'<sup>3</sup> These expressions are characteristic of his whole gospel, and indeed of the gospel generally, which rests the Christian life, not on formal obedience to a new ruler and lawgiver, but on the reception of the spirit that was in Christ. As though perceiving the danger of a lapse from this high position, St. John not only never describes himself as a slave of Christ, but records as words of his Lord, 'I no longer call you slaves, because the slave knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends, because all things which I heard from my Father I made known to you'<sup>4</sup>; and their friendship, he says, was to be proved by keeping his commandments, not through fear, but through the inward constraint of love, that vital sap which flowed from him, the parent vine, into the branches.<sup>5</sup> It seems, therefore, to be no forced departure from the primitive sense if we call Jesus Lord in recognition of the spiritual purity and power which have impressed themselves on our hearts, and from whose fulness we have received a principle of life which is freely operative in ourselves. Whatever be our doctrine, he stands at the head of Christendom: he is the leader, and we the followers; and this relation is not abrogated, but only exalted and glorified, if we follow him, not in the letter, but in the spirit.

Another title applied to Christ is 'Saviour.' This has perhaps become the dearest of all, because the sense of gratitude for spiritual blessings is most closely linked with it. But it is of less frequent occurrence in the New Testament than we might expect, and is wholly absent from the majority of the books. It is found altogether sixteen times, chiefly in the later Epistles, when the longing for deliverance may

<sup>1</sup> Δουλείας, Rom. viii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. iv. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Δουλείας, Gal. v. 1.

<sup>4</sup> John xv. 15.

<sup>5</sup> John xv. 1 sqq.

have been keenly felt by the suffering Church.<sup>1</sup> The same term is applied to God eight times.<sup>2</sup> Other connected words are also frequently met with, 'salvation,' and 'save.'<sup>3</sup> A discussion of the meaning of salvation does not come properly under our present head; and it must be sufficient to say that, in accordance with the doctrine of reconciliation, man's primary need is to be saved from sin. Whatever perishing Messianic elements may have mingled with their expectations, this kind of deliverance brought by Jesus was fundamental in the simple faith of the first disciples. In the beginning of the Gospel according to Matthew the angel is represented as telling Joseph that Jesus should save his people from their sins.<sup>4</sup> According to Luke<sup>5</sup> Jesus himself said that he had come to seek and save that which was lost. In Acts Peter declares that Jesus had been sent to bless the Jews by turning them away from their iniquities,<sup>6</sup> and that he had been exalted as a Saviour to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins.<sup>7</sup> And if Paul once says that we shall be saved through him from the wrath, by which is probably meant the judgment impending over the world,<sup>8</sup> we must remember that we can save a man from falling over a precipice, not only by removing the precipice from the man, but by removing the man from the precipice; and we have seen how emphatically Paul insists that it is man who must be changed and reconciled. Further, Paul speaks of 'repentance unto salvation,'<sup>9</sup> and exhorts his disciples to 'work out their own salvation.'<sup>10</sup> The Epistle to Titus also says that God 'saved us through the washing of regeneration, and the renewal of holy spirit which he poured

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 11; John iv. 42; Acts v. 31, xiii. 23; Eph. v. 23; Philip. iii. 20; II Tim. i. 10; Titus i. 4, ii. 13, iii. 6; II Pet. i. 1, 11, ii. 20, iii. 2, 18; I John iv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Only in Luke i. 47, and in I Tim., Titus, and Jude.

<sup>3</sup> Σωτηρία and σώζειν, the latter being a common word for deliverance from any kind of evil, such as disease.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. i. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Luke xix. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Acts iii. 26.

<sup>7</sup> Acts v. 31.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. v. 9.

<sup>9</sup> II Cor. vii. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Philip. ii. 12.



forth on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.'<sup>1</sup> We do not, therefore, depart essentially from primitive usage, and misappropriate a term which originally had quite a different meaning, if we retain the name 'Saviour' to express our sense of spiritual indebtedness to Jesus. Nothing excites in us so deep and pure a love as the consciousness that through the influence of another we have been saved from the evil in ourselves, and wakened to a vivid faith in the reality of our communion with God. This power of saving and of communicating life belongs in its degree to all purified souls ; and it may be that many individuals recognize first or more immediately the influence of some minor star amid the galaxy of saints. But while these are limited in their action to special circles, and for the most part are soon forgotten, the spirit of Christ remains as a perennial source of power, joyfully recognized from age to age through the whole range of the universal Church which bears his name. And even in individual experience it is often the case that the gifted soul which first awakened in us the consciousness of spiritual claims, and for a time seemed to possess our whole being, gradually ceases to be a present influence in our thought and life, while Jesus continues daily to dwell in the heart by faith, and to print there the impress of his spirit.

We come now to a phrase of the deepest significance. Jesus is called 'the Son of God,' if not very constantly, still with sufficient frequency in the New Testament to fix our attention upon this term ; and sometimes it is accompanied by epithets which assign to him a place apart—'his own Son' ;<sup>2</sup> 'the only' or 'unique Son.'<sup>3</sup> It has come down

<sup>1</sup> Titus iii. 5 sq.

<sup>2</sup> Τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱόν, Rom. viii. 3 ; τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ, Rom. viii. 32. See a discussion of the use of ἑαυτοῦ and ἰδιος in later Greek in J. H. Moulton, *Grammar of N.T. Greek*, I, pp. 87 sqq. There is a tendency to a weakening of their meaning ; but this is not invariable. 'In the papyri is found the singular used thus as a term of endearment to near relations : e.g., ὁ δέῖνα τῷ ἰδίῳ χαίρειν.' See also Dr. Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary*, pp. 216 sq.

<sup>3</sup> Ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός, John i. 18, where the reading is disputed ; iii. 16.

to our own time, and we use it as most richly descriptive of that which was characteristic in the personality of Jesus. We have seen reasons for not accepting the ecclesiastical dogma, which, having started from this expression, gradually assumed a form which is really inconsistent with it; for in that dogma Jesus is not the Son of God, but God himself; and if you say that the God who was incarnate in him was God the Son, not only do you still make a radical change in the phraseology, but we are at once transported from a human relation to the metaphysics of Deity. Whatever varieties of opinion there may be in different writings of the New Testament, the term, if I am not mistaken, is there applied invariably to the man Jesus, sprung from the seed of David,<sup>1</sup> and we nowhere, unless it be in the Epistle to the Hebrews, hear of a Son of God who was independent of and anterior to the human being with whom he became united. We must, then, look for a sense in which this exalted title may be applied to a man.

We may begin by observing that the whole doctrine of Divine Sonship is extended from Jesus to his disciples; and if he is placed on a solitary eminence, it is because he is the 'first-born among many brethren.'<sup>2</sup> 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God';<sup>3</sup> 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God,' and we are 'fellow-heirs with Christ';<sup>4</sup> 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are.'<sup>5</sup> This relationship implies some wonderful affinity between God and man. Man is 'the image and glory of God.'<sup>6</sup> The disciples were 'a temple of God,' and the Spirit of God dwelt in them.<sup>7</sup> Their body was a temple of the Holy Spirit which was in them.<sup>8</sup> They were partakers of the Divine

<sup>1</sup> See especially Rom. i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. viii. 16 sq.

<sup>5</sup> I John iii. 1, according to the most approved reading.

<sup>6</sup> I Cor. xi. 7.

<sup>7</sup> I Cor. iii. 16.

<sup>8</sup> I Cor. vi. 19.



nature.<sup>1</sup> Their fellowship was with the Father.<sup>2</sup> They were born out of God, and could not sin.<sup>3</sup> They abode in God, and God in them,<sup>4</sup> and they had an anointing which taught them concerning all things.<sup>5</sup> These are marvellous sayings, to which too little attention has been paid. They proceed from a profound spiritual experience; and it is only through some similar experience that we can understand their meaning or accept their truth. They expressed realities to the early theologians. For instance, Irenæus says that the Son of God became Son of Man that man might become Son of God.<sup>6</sup> Clement of Alexandria sums up the work of Christ as 'deifying man by heavenly teaching.'<sup>7</sup> Again he says, 'The soul, having received lordly power, practises being God,'<sup>8</sup> and 'He who obeys the Lord . . . becomes completely perfect according to the image of the teacher, a God walking about in flesh.'<sup>9</sup> Hippolytus says, 'Thou shalt be a companion of God . . . for thou hast become a God . . . Thou hast been deified, having been born immortal.'<sup>10</sup> Origen is equally explicit: 'From him Divine and human nature began to be woven together, in order that human nature, by communion with that which is more Divine, may become Divine, not only in Jesus, but also in all those who, along with faith, take up the life which Jesus taught.'<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> II Pet. i. 4.

<sup>2</sup> I John i. 3.

<sup>3</sup> I John ii. 29, iii. 9, iv. 7.

<sup>4</sup> I John iv. 12, 16.

<sup>5</sup> I John ii. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Haer. III, x. 2, *ut et homo fieret filius Dei*. See also III, xix. 1. Compare V, xvi. 2, in which Christ is represented as coming to restore the lost image, and make man like 'the invisible Father.'

<sup>7</sup> Οὐρανίῳ διδασκαλίᾳ θεοποιῶν τὸν ἄνθρωπον. *Cohort ad Gentes xi.* pp. 88 sq., Potter.

<sup>8</sup> Δύναμιν λαβοῦσα κυριακὴν ἢ ψυχὴ μελετᾷ εἶναι θεός. *Strom.* VI, 14, p. 797.

<sup>9</sup> Ὁ τῷ κυρίῳ πειθόμενος . . . τελέως ἐκτελεῖται κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ διδασκάλου, ἐν σαρκὶ περιπολῶν θεός. *Strom.* VII, 16, p. 894.

<sup>10</sup> Ἔσθ' ὁμιλητὴς θεοῦ, . . . Γέγονας γὰρ θεός. . . ἐθεοποιήθης, ἀθάνατος γεννηθείς. *Ref.* x. 34.

<sup>11</sup> *Cont. Celsum*, iii. 28 : ἀπ' ἐκείνου ἤρξατο θεία καὶ ἀνθρωπίνη συννυφαίνεσθαι φύσις· ἢ ἀνθρωπίνη τῇ πρὸς τὸ θειότερον κοινωνία γένηται θεία

*The Epistle to Diognetus*, in a beautiful passage, says, 'He who takes up the burden of his neighbour, he who wishes to benefit another who is deficient in that in which he himself is superior, who, ministering to those in need the things which he has received from God, becomes a God to those who receive—he is an imitation of God.'<sup>1</sup> So, at a later time, Athanasius says, 'The Logos himself became man that we may be deified,'<sup>2</sup> and this by participation of his spirit.<sup>3</sup> These expressions of the theologians are of high import, though they are not intended to identify our sonship with Christ's. He is regarded as the only genuine Son. He alone was generated from the being of the Father.<sup>4</sup> He was generated eternally out of the substance of the Father,<sup>5</sup> the Son by nature,<sup>6</sup> whereas we are sons by virtue, called sons by grace.<sup>7</sup> This lofty strain has not been wholly forgotten in more recent times. Henry More sings :—

'I come from heaven ; am an immortal ray  
Of God ; O joy ! and back to God shall go.  
.....Father of lights,  
We live, as Thou, clad with eternal day.'<sup>8</sup>

And Cudworth says, 'This Divine life, begun and kindled in any heart, wheresoever it be, is something of God in flesh, and, in a sober and qualified sense, Divinity incarnate ; and all particular Christians, that are really possessed of it,

οὐκ ἐν μόνῳ τῷ Ἰησοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς μετὰ τοῦ πιστεύειν ἀναλαμβάνουσι βίον, ὃν Ἰησοῦς ἐδίδαξεν.

<sup>1</sup> § 10.

<sup>2</sup> Αὐτὸς [ὁ λόγος] ἐνηνθρώπησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν. *De Incarn.* 54.

<sup>3</sup> *Epist. de Dec. Nic. Syn.*, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Τοῦτον μόνον ἐξ ὄντων ἐγέννα· τὸ γὰρ ὃν αὐτὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἦν, ἐξ οὗ τὸ γεννηθέν. Hippol., *Ref.* x. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς.

<sup>6</sup> Κατὰ τὴν φύσιν.

<sup>7</sup> Ἐξ ἀρετῆς, οἱ κατὰ χάριν καλούμενοι υἱοί. Athan., *Epist de Dec. Nic. Syn.*, 22 and 31.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century*, II, p. 312.



so many mystical Christs.'<sup>1</sup> Now let us endeavour to interpret the Christian experience on which these exalted phrases are based.

In the Christian mind there is a consciousness of a power which is in us, but not of us ; of a Spirit higher than our own, which claims our allegiance, and gives intimations of a life of absolute holiness and love, which alone is our true life, a life which would make us more, not less human, and would at the same time bring us into mysterious union with God. We speak of these things as ideals ; and for most of us they are ideal, because the lower nature is not yet brought into absolute harmony with the Spirit of God, and the Divine will has not a perfectly free course within us. When our experiences are new and vivid, we refer them to the direct action of God ; and what we afterwards call our ideals are his self-revelation to the soul, and his call to us to be recipients of Divine life. Christianity, then, teaches the indwelling of God in the hearts of all disciples. It is this indwelling that constitutes their sonship to God ; and their entrance into clear consciousness of this Divine relationship is their ' adoption,' the bestowal of the privileges of full-grown sons.

Now let us note more explicitly what are the implications of this doctrine. It implies, in the first place, that man in his ideal nature is made in the likeness of God ; for the son must resemble the father. Secondly, the filial relation indicates dependence ; for the son owes his existence to the father, not the father to the son. And accordingly the son can of himself do nothing. It is the indwelling Father who prompts his words and deeds ; and his highest aspiration is to merge his own will in the will of the Father. Thirdly, it involves an intimate communion between God and man. But if we ask for the method of this communion, clearly the human analogy becomes inadequate. A human father and

<sup>1</sup> *First Sermon, preached before the House of Commons, 31 March, 1647, p. 50, printed at the end of the second Vol. of the 4to edition of the Intellectual System.*



son are two separated individuals, and, though the son owes his origin to his father, and may consequently love and obey him, he has his own independent life, which continues unaltered after his father's decease. But it cannot be so in the relation between us and God, for we are always dependent on his living energy, and our being has no reality apart from him. Our communion with him, therefore, does not resemble a conversation between friends, but is a conscious reception of his life within that life which, in distinction from our fellow-men, we call *our* life. Our reason is a ray of his eternal light. Our love, our holiness, our righteousness, are his Spirit dwelling within us; and we can imagine this Spirit given with such fulness, and our own surrender to it so complete, that, without losing our individual existence and characteristics, our finite personality should melt, as it were, into the Divine, so as to become, on its limited scale, an untarnished expression of the infinite and absolute goodness. And, fourthly, a man in whom this communion was realized would be a revealer of God, not in the sense of one who, with miraculous knowledge, laid down undiscoverable dogmas about him, but of one who exhibited the Spirit of God, living, moving, speaking amid the life of men.

Have we not in these words, drawn from the religious experience of men, delineated the figure of him who, sprung from the seed of David according to the flesh, was appointed Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness?<sup>1</sup> These words of the Apostle are the earliest definition we possess of the Sonship of Christ; and, like words already quoted, they place him simply at the head of a human brotherhood. Do you say that the 'Spirit of holiness' is the Spirit of God? Undoubtedly it is; but then the faithful man is the temple of the Holy Spirit; and if there is a metaphysical connexion between man and God in the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 3, 4. 'Ὁρισθέντος properly means 'appointed' or 'ordained,' as in Acts xvii. 31.



one case, so is there in the other. But we cannot follow the Greek theologians in dogmatizing about the manner and method of this connexion. These things are apprehended rather by the experience of the heart than through the forms of the understanding, and must be expressed in language more or less figurative. History warns us only too plainly that the spiritual discernment and the heavenly temper, to which alone these things are abiding realities, may be lost in the fury and self-confidence of intellectual discussion.

How, then, it may be asked, is Christ to be distinguished from an ordinary man? First, let us observe that the reproach which is brought against the view here presented, that it reduces Christ to 'a mere man,' is founded on a non-Christian view of what man is, and those who make it have not yet learned that those who honour the Father must honour man, who is his child. If by 'a mere man' is meant a creature who is sprung from the dust, and has no supernatural relations, then the objection simply drops away as entirely groundless, for we cannot wholly sever man from the Divine Source and Sustainer of his being. The word 'ordinary' is equally unfortunate, for great men are, by that very fact, not ordinary men; and if anyone described Moses, or Plato, or Shakespeare as an ordinary man, he would simply display his own ignorance. If we look at Christ purely from the historical point of view, he must be classed with the very small group of men who have founded great and enduring religions; and in this very exceptional class he is pre-eminent in the grandeur of his character, the largeness and spirituality of his views, and the depth of his insight. Simply as an historical figure, then, he stands alone and supreme as a revealer of the spiritual relations of man, and as a quickener of the highest spiritual life in others. If we turn from the larger world to Christendom, his supremacy remains unimpaired. Even if we could imagine that numbers had attained the same spiritual elevation, still his would be the original and creative soul which drew its holy life and its



great ideas from its immediate communion with God, and, endowed with a full measure of the Divine Spirit, was conscious of its native sonship to God. We therefore correctly describe him as *the* Son, or even as the only or unique Son of God, because he dwells apart, not only in the depth and power, but in the originality of his filial consciousness, whereas the highest saints in Christendom have owned their dependence upon him for the kindling of their better life.

To this we must add that, as the Christ, the man chosen in the designs of providence to break the limits of Judaism, and usher in a kingdom of God which was to grow into a universal spiritual brotherhood, he necessarily drew to himself epithets which are applicable to no other. This view can hardly appeal to us with its ancient force; but the minds of the first generation of Christians were so entirely imbued with it that they inevitably regarded him as one endowed with Divine gifts which belonged to himself alone. This Messianic belief may account for some of the most exalted expressions respecting him in the New Testament; but we should observe that his power and authority are always represented as delegated to him by God.<sup>1</sup>

It is also a subject for serious inquiry whether some of the phrases of the New Testament have not been influenced by the imperial and religious language of the time, and whether they do not represent the Christian in its opposition to the heathen claim. Not only, as we have seen, were men associated with God in a way from which we should shrink, but the title 'God' itself was applied to human beings with a familiarity which has become quite impossible for us. This usage is not without example even among the Jews. Moses was to be as God to his brother,<sup>2</sup> and was made God to Pharaoh, with Aaron for his prophet.<sup>3</sup> The fourth Evangelist, in order to explain Christ's words, expressly refers

<sup>1</sup> See for instance Matt. xi. 27, xxviii. 18; John iii. 35, v. 22, xiii. 3, xvii. 22, 24; Acts ii. 36, xvii. 31; Philip. ii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. iv. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. vii. 1.



to the Scriptural authority, 'I said, ye are gods,'<sup>1</sup> and interprets it as denoting those to whom the word of God came. This reminds us of the apology which Sextus Empiricus makes for the declaration of Empedocles, 'I am to you immortal God.'<sup>2</sup> This, it is said, was not uttered through arrogance, but in reliance on the dogma that like is known by like; and the philosopher meant that, having kept his mind pure, he apprehended the God without him by the God within him.<sup>3</sup> In times nearer the birth of Christianity Cicero speaks of Plato as 'a god of philosophers';<sup>4</sup> and Atticus, in his admiration, declares that he was 'truly sent from the gods.'<sup>5</sup> It is well known that the successors of Alexander the Great were styled gods.<sup>6</sup> More than one Ptolemy was called 'Saviour.' An Antiochus bore the title of 'Epiphanes,' which implies an incarnation and manifestation of Deity. Julius Cæsar, after his death, was formally enrolled in the number of the gods, and it was believed that a comet was his soul received into heaven.<sup>7</sup> His successor assumed the title of Augustus, a word with a distinctly religious significance.<sup>8</sup> Nero is advised by

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxii. 6; John x. 34.      <sup>2</sup> Χαίρετ', ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῶν θεὸς ἄμβροτος.

<sup>3</sup> *Adv. Grammaticos* I, 13, pp. 283 sq.

<sup>4</sup> 'Quasi quendam deum philosophorum.' *De Nat. deor.*, II, xii. § 32.

<sup>5</sup> Κατάπεμπτos ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐκ θεῶν. Quoted by Eusebius, *Praep. Evan.* xi. 2.

<sup>6</sup> A papyrus even accosts a royal pair as ὑμᾶς τοὺς θεοὺς μεγίστους καὶ ἀντιλήμπτους. Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, p. 92.

<sup>7</sup> 'In deorum numerum relatus est, non ore modo decernentium, sed et persuasione vulgi.' Sueton., *Julius*, lxxxviii. See also Ovid, *Metamor.*, lib. xv. 746 sqq., 'Caesar in urbe sua Deus est.' Strabo, in a passage where no such allusion is required, refers to him as ὁ θεὸς Καῖσαρ. *Geograph.* xvii. 1.

<sup>8</sup> 'Ut Augustus potius vocaretur, non tantum novo, sed etiam ampliore cognomine, quod loca quoque religiosa, et in quibus augurato quid consecratur, augusta dicuntur.' Suetonius, *Octavius*, vii. Ovid (*Fasti* i. 608-610) says—

'Hic socium summo cum Jove nomen habet.

Sancta vocant augusta patres: augusta vocantur

Templa sacerdotum rite dicata manu.'

Dio (liii. p. 507, ed. 1606) writes, Αὐγουστος, ὡς καὶ πλεῖόν τι ἢ κατὰ

Seneca to regard himself as the vicegerent of the gods, and is told that he is the mind of the republic, while it is his body.<sup>1</sup> Domitian, when he dictated a formal letter in the name of his procurators, began with the words, 'Our Lord and God orders'; and afterwards it was instituted that he should not be otherwise called either in writing or speech.<sup>2</sup> But some of the most interesting expressions are found in Greek inscriptions, which show how common it was, in the eastern portions of the empire, to apply exalted religious language to men. Thus the title 'son of God' is frequently applied to Augustus. The inscription at Priene says of him that 'the providence which rules over all has filled this man with such gifts for the salvation of the world as designate him the Saviour for us and for the coming generations. . . . Not only has he surpassed the good deeds of men of earlier time, but it is impossible that one greater than he can ever appear. The birthday of God has brought to the world glad tidings that are bound up in him.'<sup>3</sup> From his birthday a new era begins.'<sup>4</sup> The Ephesians called Julius Cæsar 'the manifested God and common Saviour of human life, sprung from Ares and Aphrodite.' Nero, at Assos, is described as 'the Lord of the whole world.' At Ephesus Trajan is celebrated as 'the Saviour and Benefactor of the whole world.'<sup>5</sup> Some of this highly wrought language

ἀνθρώπους ὧν ἐπεκλήθη. πάντα γὰρ τὰ ἐντιμότερα καὶ τὰ ἱερώτατα αὐγουστα προσαγορεύεται, ἐξ οὐπερ καὶ σεβαστὸν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐλληνίζοντες πως, ὥσπερ τινὰ σεπτὸν, ἀπὸ τοῦ σεβάζεσθαι, προσεῖπον. For the last two references I am indebted to W. T. Arnold, *Studies of Roman Imperialism*, edited by Edward Fiddes, 1906, p. 21.

<sup>1</sup> *De Clementia* I, i. 2, v. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 'Dominus et Deus noster sic fieri jubet.' Sueton., *Domit.* xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Ἡρξεν δὲ τῷ κόσμῳ τῶν δι' αὐτὸν εὐαγγελίων ἡ γενέθλιος τοῦ θεοῦ.

<sup>4</sup> I follow the translation of Professor Iverach, in an article, 'Christ and Caesar—the Rival Saviours of the Second Century,' in the *Hibbert Journal*, January, 1906, p. 366. The inscription at Halicarnassus extols him as 'Saviour of the common race of men.'

<sup>5</sup> For the inscriptions see an article by Wendland, 'ΣΩΤΗΡ eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung,' in the *Zeitschr. f. neut. Wiss.*, 1904



is applied also to far less distinguished men. For instance, a judge is addressed as 'saviour and benefactor of all.'<sup>1</sup> But enough has been said to show that the religious atmosphere of the early centuries was very unlike that to which we are accustomed. It would be a mistake to regard the language which is applied to the emperors as idle flattery. The divine right of kings was recognized with a conviction which has vanished from our minds. Even in the view of Paul the authorities of the State were appointed by God, so that he who resisted the authority resisted the ordinance of God.<sup>2</sup> The emperor, in his distant and awful majesty, seemed to be an incarnation of the imperial idea, and to be under the immediate direction of the gods, among whom he might therefore be himself classed. The belief in Divine incarnation, in which man becomes virtually identified with God, still survives in the East. Bábí doctrine teaches that 'The Primal Will has . . . incarnated itself from time to time in a human form. . . . That which spoke in all the prophets of the Past, now speaks through the Báb.' This makes the prophet so completely the instrument of God that his own personality seems to become identified with that of his predecessor. Thus Behá'u'lláh speaks of the execution of the Báb as one of his own experiences—'At length they suspended my glorious body in the air, and wounded it with the bullets of malice and hatred, until my spirit returned to the Supreme Companion.' In a letter to the Pope, Behá says, 'The Word which the Most Faithful wrote hath appeared: It hath indeed descended into the form of man in this time: blessed is the Lord, who is the Father: He hath come with His most mighty Power amongst the nations.'<sup>3</sup>

Now, we must bear all this in mind when we read the

pp. 335 sqq. See also remarks and quotations in an Address on *Christianity in the Light of Historical Science*, by Dr. J. E. Carpenter, pp. 13 sqq.

<sup>1</sup> Lietzmann, *Griechische Papyri*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Browne, in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1889, pp. 913 sq., 952, 965.



language of the New Testament. The early Christians could not but be influenced by the language of their time, and understand it in accordance with the ideas of the time. They may, indeed, to some extent, have deliberately adopted current phrases, while they infused into them a higher and more spiritual sense, and placed Christ in opposition to the emperors. He was *their* Lord and Saviour, come to be the Saviour of the world, but by means far other than those of imperial power. His throne had been a cross, his crown a crown of thorns, and his imperial sway was one, not of grasping, but of self-emptying. To him alone could the religious language which was bestowed on the emperors be justly applied ; for he it was who truly enshrined the Spirit of the holy and righteous and loving God, and the Divine ideal of human life. These two ideals still confront one another in the world ; and the Christ, wearied with cries of Lord, Lord, waits for the heart-felt homage of a kingdom which is nominally his.

From all that has been said it is apparent why the thought of God and the thought of Christ are inseparable in the Christian mind. Not only does he illustrate the ascent of the human soul in adoration, and the perfect obedience of a surrendered will, but he shows the descent of heavenly love into the conditions of mortality, in order to seek and save the lost. With the great mass of Christians it is the latter aspect of his life that has wrought with the most powerful fascination. He is loved less as the heroic example than as the one who has brought near the Divine sympathy and compassion ; and God is thought of, not only as the infinite and incomprehensible Creator, but as the Father whose Spirit was manifested in Christ, and is ever close to the heart of man.

Certain questions still remain, which we must not pass over.

It is commonly said that Christ was sinless. This statement may be understood in two very different ways. If it be understood in the absolute sense which is usual in modern



discussions, and it be asserted that no shadow of moral evil ever touched his inmost thought or feeling during all those thirty years of which we know nothing, it is obvious that this lies beyond our natural means of knowledge, and we may be content without either affirming or denying it. It is a purely speculative question, which hardly entered the range of the earliest Christian thought, and has no practical bearing. Passages in the New Testament which refer to his sinlessness are not of a kind to support a dogma on the subject ; for they are the natural assertions of his righteousness, in opposition to those who traduced him, and might be used of any true man in similar circumstances. To take a casual example : Garrison was accused of being an infidel, and a violator of all law, both human and divine. In defending him against such charges Francis Jackson wrote, in a private letter, ‘His character is not only spotless, but has never been impeached.’<sup>1</sup> So, when Christ asks, ‘Which of you convicteth me of sin?’<sup>2</sup> he simply asserts the purity and uprightness of his motives in his public work ; and when the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that Christ was ‘tempted in all things like us, without sin,’<sup>3</sup> he is not laying down a metaphysical dogma, but maintaining Christ’s superiority to the temptations which are common to mankind. It is, indeed, sometimes said that, as he was man, he must have had experience of sin ; but if, as we saw reason to believe, sin is a perversion, and not of the essence of humanity, this does not follow, and, for my own part, I should have no difficulty in believing that one transcendent soul was lifted clear above the common infirmity, and lived from the first in undisturbed communion with God. We need not, however, perplex ourselves with difficulties we cannot solve. If we understand the doctrine in a large and practical sense, we surely need not hesitate to accept it. There is in Christ’s

<sup>1</sup> *A Short Biography of William Lloyd Garrison*, by V. Tchertkoff and F. Holah, pp. 89 sq.

<sup>2</sup> John viii. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. iv. 15.



history no trace of any experience of conversion. Teaching a religion which more than any other has awakened the sense of sin, he seems quite unconscious of it himself. He lives serenely in a Divine atmosphere, with no confessions and no repentances. One fact indeed seems opposed to this statement. John preached in the wilderness 'the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,'<sup>1</sup> and to this baptism Jesus came. This event has, from early times, perplexed theologians, and they have imagined reasons for Christ's action, of which there is not a trace in the Gospels. It is certainly not necessary to suppose that he was conscious of any guilty course of life which he was called upon to renounce. But unless he had some consciousness of weakness and dependence, some of those feelings which belong to us only as imperfect and liable to sin, as beings who must be humble before the infinite holiness of God, it is difficult to understand his submission to an ordinance so expressly implicated with an acknowledgment of moral infirmity. At the same time the recorded objection of John to administer the rite may describe quite truly the impression of a pure and lofty character which Jesus made upon others; and his desire for baptism may have sprung only from his own delicate sense of inward want.

This view, that, apart from any sense of guilt, he felt the need of inward renewal and uplifting, is confirmed by his habit of solitary prayer; for prayer is an aspiration after fuller and deeper life, a seeking for refuge from our own frailties in the Divine strength. In connexion with prayer we must ask, is it certain, or even probable, that he himself never used the prayer which he taught to his disciples?

One other incident is appealed to as showing traces of the sense of sin. He disclaimed the title 'good'—'Why callest thou me good? None is good save one, even God.'<sup>2</sup> Here

<sup>1</sup> Mark i. 4; Luke iii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Mark x. 18; Luke xviii. 19. The reading in Matt. xix. 17, according to the best authorities, is different.



we have the unmistakable language of humility and dependence, but not necessarily of the sense of sin. The questioner is referred to the highest, or rather to the only source of goodness. Goodness is not of human creation, and no man can claim it as his own ; and therefore the easy and thoughtless address of the rich man repelled Jesus, who felt always that his high endowments were given to him by God, and were therefore no fitting object for empty compliments. We have only to add that the charges which were brought against him by his enemies accuse him of nothing which is wrong in our eyes, and simply betray the mistaken views of bigotry or malice ; and on his followers he left an impression of holiness which led them to describe him as ‘the holy and just one.’<sup>1</sup> This impression has remained, and most even of those who have subjected his history to the severest criticism gladly admit the supreme saintliness of his character.

And now we must ask, in concluding this portion of our subject, whether the view which has been presented is consistent with our enlarged knowledge of the universe. I think it is entirely so ; for it brings Jesus before us, not as an exceptional portent in the boundless realms of being, but as the highest instance of the operation of a great spiritual law. If the Divine energy is everywhere present, even in the meanest insect, if the Divine Spirit animates the soul of man, if there are ascending grades of character and of spiritual illumination, then there is no reason why the manifestation of God’s holiness and love in a man should not reach in some instance a supreme splendour, and become through him a source of spiritual light to others. So understood, the union of God with Christ becomes, to use the current phraseology, exceptional in degree, and not in kind.

But still it may be asked why this exceptional manifestation came so late in the world’s history, and has made so little progress in the ‘redemption of the world.’ We can only answer that it seems to be a law of providence that

<sup>1</sup> Acts iii. 14.

mankind should advance by very slow degrees, and ages of progress were needed before such a spiritual religion as Christianity could take any root in the hearts of men. We must recognize it as one of many factors in the world's growth ; and it is in accordance with the whole analogy of human evolution that in proportion to the purity of its idea and the sublimity of its aim it should work slowly, and only after millenniums subdue and transform the whole reluctant mass, and turn the kingdoms of the world into the kingdom of God and of his Christ. In all this, we may observe, there is nothing which we cannot imagine repeated in ten thousand worlds ; and in gazing upon Christ we see not an abnormal and solitary being in this vast universe, but an illustration of the cosmic law of spiritual growth, and the Divine glory which awaits all faithful souls.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE WORK OF CHRIST

WE must now pass on to investigate the doctrine of Christ's work. Some intimations respecting the character of this work have been given in laying down a doctrine about his person. But it is necessary, for the sake of distinctness, to disengage this portion of our subject for separate consideration. It relates to that which Christ accomplished, and in the order of providence was intended to accomplish, for the benefit of mankind. Christianity is a religion of salvation, and Christ himself said that he had come to seek and save the lost.<sup>1</sup> But salvation is a vague word, denoting only deliverance from something; and therefore its nature may be, and has been, very variously conceived. Hence we have to inquire what it is, and how it is or has been effected.

Philo, in speaking of the work of Moses, refers to him under the four aspects of king, legislator, high-priest, and prophet, and in each of these assigns to him the highest rank.<sup>2</sup> Similarly it became customary with theologians to divide the functions of Christ into prophetic, sacerdotal, and regal, and to consider the nature of his work under these three heads.<sup>3</sup> This is rather an artificial division; for

<sup>1</sup> Luke xix. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *De Vita Mosis*, II, § 1, with the subsequent treatment.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance *Cat. Rom.*, Pars I, de artic. II, cap. iii. § x., where they are described as 'trium personarum partes.' The distinction is found in Eusebius, *H.E.*, I, 3, 'alone high-priest of the universe, and alone king of all creation, and alone chief prophet of the prophets.'

whereas Christ was literally a prophet, it is only figuratively that he can be called priest or king, and it is never well to forget that he was in fact a layman, and belonged to a humble class in society. Still, so vast a structure of doctrine has been built, especially on the assumption of his priesthood, that it will be convenient to follow the usual division.

### I. The Prophetic Office

The prophetic office of Christ was fulfilled by his teaching. This constituted the chief work of his active ministry, and to it a primary place ought always to be assigned. To suppose that we can honour himself while we neglect his teaching, and make no effort to conform our lives to it, is a fatal error, but one into which men are easily tempted to fall. He himself foresaw the danger: 'Why do ye call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?'<sup>1</sup> 'If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.'<sup>2</sup> This truth must be obvious to any mind that will deal honestly with itself. It is not to honour, but to insult him, to bestow on him empty praise, and profess to be his follower, while you care nothing for the aims on which his heart was set, and think that his principles are very nice for a world that never existed, but are supremely silly for such a world as that in which we live. But if, as Christians, we feel bound by his teaching, some important questions arise, to which we must endeavour to give candid and true answers.

First, we must ask, was Christ infallible? At no very distant date theologians of every school, Unitarian no less than Catholic, would have answered this question in the affirmative, and would at the same time have asserted that the records of his teaching were infallible. But recently a great change has taken place; and some even of those who

<sup>1</sup> Luke vi. 46; or, as it stands in Matthew vii. 21, 'Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.'

<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 15.



believe that Christ was God incarnate have, as we have seen, removed his infallibility by their doctrine of Kenosis. This is a stupendous change ; for it destroys the foundation-stone of the whole fabric of ecclesiastical dogma, and it is certainly strange that any who think that God himself laid aside his omniscience, in order to render his revelation fallible, should continue to believe in the infallibility of assemblies of wrangling bishops. But we must examine this question for ourselves. The proposition that Christ was infallible is inherently incapable of proof. It means that he can never have entertained the smallest error in any branch of knowledge, that whatever views he held upon any conceivable subject, literary, historical, scientific, as well as moral and religious, precisely corresponded with the facts ; and of this there is or can be no evidence, either intellectual or spiritual. The doctrine of his infallibility is simply a postulate, wrongly, though not unnaturally, founded on the reverence with which his teaching is justly regarded ; and as men came to rely more and more on external authority, they were the more compelled to assert this as the fundamental assumption on which all doctrinal reasoning must be based, and the denial of which excluded a man altogether from the pale of Christianity.

Appeal, however, may be made to the testimony of Jesus himself. He always taught with authority, and confidently set aside whatever displeased him in the religion of the day. He said, ' To this end have I been born, and to this end have I come into the world, that I may bear witness to the truth ' ;<sup>1</sup> and again, ' I did not speak from myself ; but the Father who sent me himself gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak.'<sup>2</sup> But these and similar sayings, which we may reasonably believe to be correctly reported, at least in substance, fall far short of a claim to infallibility. They clearly refer to the general tenor of his teaching, and especially to that part of it which

<sup>1</sup> John xviii. 37.

<sup>2</sup> John xii. 49.



placed him in sharp antagonism to the popular religion of his time. That the great spiritual principles, which shone as a heavenly light within his soul, were true and Divine he was absolutely convinced. They were no inventions of his own, but the Word of God revealed in his conscience and his heart ; and he felt that it was laid upon him as a Divine commandment to utter them. This kind of conviction is characteristic of the prophetic soul in all times. The prophet is driven to speak what comes to him as a message from heaven, and would condemn himself as unfaithful if he concealed it in his own breast. Indeed, every man who is moved by deep spiritual conviction, which transcends all his selfish limitations and prepossessions, has something of this experience. But in its most transcendent form it does not guarantee the infallibility of everything that the prophet may utter. In matters that lie apart from his prophetic insight he may follow the opinions of his time, and the demand that we must believe everything that he says or nothing has neither reason nor spirituality to commend it, but is simply the requirement of laziness and incompetence.

But though it is impossible to prove that Christ was infallible, it might be equally impossible to disprove it, and we might have to be content without returning any answer to our question. There is, however, some evidence to which we must now attend. Even if we limit our view to the sphere of faith and morals, we may fairly infer from historical facts that it was no part of Christ's purpose to communicate a dogmatic revelation. It is in the interests of dogma that his infallibility is insisted on ; and when a statement respecting the providential purpose of Christianity is put forward, it is a legitimate mode of testing this to consider what condition of facts might be reasonably anticipated if the statement were correct, and then to argue that the statement is not correct because the facts are not there. It is very easy to misrepresent this mode of argument, as though it were impugning the wisdom of Divine providence ; and therefore we must



carefully observe that it does nothing of the kind, but only questions a particular human interpretation of providence. It assumes that the means which God adopts for the fulfilment of his purposes must be the best adapted to secure the end in view ; and that therefore we may infer from the means which lie open to our observation the nature of the purpose which is beyond the range of our immediate knowledge. Now, if it had been the purpose of God or of Christ to communicate a supernatural system of dogma, the great teacher would surely have followed a very different method from that which the Gospels attribute to him. The required system is nowhere to be found in the records of his life ; and it is necessary to resort to the pure fiction that he taught it to the Apostles, who handed it down to their successors. Again, if his teaching was intended to have the stamp of Divine infallibility, we should expect the written records of it to be widely different from what they are ; for an infallibility which was necessary for the world's salvation would surely not have been allowed to disappear at the first stage of its transmission. But what are the facts ? Jesus spoke in Aramaic, and, as our Gospels are written in Greek, we have only translations of what he said. We have no reason for supposing that his words were reported at the time when they were spoken, and any Aramaic records of them which may have once existed were written from recollection, and could have no guarantee of absolute accuracy. In any case these Aramaic records have been allowed to perish ; and the Greek translations of them preserved in the Gospels, which were written more than a generation after the death of Christ, prove, by their variations in reporting the same utterances, that the original words had become uncertain, and whatever infallibility they may have once possessed was lost in transmission. And again, we cannot always be sure of the meaning of Christ's sayings, as they stand in the Gospels, for they actually receive different interpretations ; and therefore, in passing into our minds,



they become subject to all the uncertainties of our limited faculty. Is it unreasonable to infer that, when such very inadequate provision was made for the expression and preservation of an infallible system of dogma, the communication of such a system lay entirely outside the purpose of Jesus, and he was not miraculously gifted with an infallibility which would have been superfluous?

We must now proceed to a more direct order of evidence. We have already seen that the doctrine of Kenosis is founded on the clear indications that Christ accepted some erroneous opinions current in his time, and it will be sufficient now to refer to a single instance in which, according to the representations of our evangelists, his judgment was demonstrably at fault. One of the functions usually ascribed to a prophet is the power of prediction; and though it was on higher grounds that Jesus was recognized as a prophet, certain predictions are attributed to him. All three Synoptical Gospels ascribe to him an eschatological rhapsody, in which he depicts the great and terrible consummation of all earthly things. He then says, 'This generation shall not pass away till all these things take place,' and immediately adds the very solemn and confident assertion, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.'<sup>1</sup> But that generation fell asleep, and Christians began to ask, 'Where is the promise of his coming?' for the world went on as it had done from the beginning of creation.<sup>2</sup> It was necessary to silence these men by treating them as mockers, and to explain away the sacred word. But it is not necessary for us either to mock or to explain away. Critics of the Gospels may doubt whether Jesus ever really made use of words so startling in their mixed solemnity and error.<sup>3</sup> But if he did not, his infallibility vanishes in the fallibility of the records; and if he did, then we must frankly admit that the closeness

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiv. 34, 35; Mark xiii. 30, 31; Luke xxi. 32, 33.

<sup>2</sup> II Peter iii. 4.

<sup>3</sup> This subject will be dealt with more fully when we treat of eschatology.



of his communion with God did not exempt him from the possibility of mistake even in some of his most confident convictions.

If the case is so, it may be asked, is not the authority of Christ destroyed? In a certain sense it is; but the highest authority remains. In regard to mere outward facts, such as the authorship of an ancient book, or the scientific explanation of certain obscure phenomena, or the mode in which the present world is to come to an end, he has no authority; for it was no part of his mission to be a literary critic, or a proclaimer of scientific laws. In such matters it seems clear that he simply accepted the opinions of his time. And here we must once more remark that it is only a very mechanical view of inspiration that can bring these within its range. Inspiration in its truest sense does not consist of depositing in the mind ready-made propositions upon all kinds of subjects, but of a quickening and clearing of insight into moral and spiritual truth. We find the plainest intimations of its nature in the exaltation of prayer, which gives a deeper comprehension of God's Spirit and Will, but throws no light upon questions which come within the scope of purely intellectual knowledge and judgment. We must, then, look for the prophetic authority of Christ in the moral and spiritual realm. But here too we must make a distinction; for the belief in demons, and the expectation of the speedy coming of the Son of Man are at least closely connected with that realm. His authority, therefore, does not attach itself to the mere form of proposition in which he may make an announcement; nor is it imposed from without as something unconditioned by our own judgment and discrimination. A truth which came to us in this way, and was received by us with irresponsible submission, would have nothing religious in it, but would lie as a dead deposit in the mind, and leave the heart and will untouched. The authority of Christ is that of the higher over the lower soul, of one who tells what he has seen and heard in the intimacy of Divine communion,

disclosing the deep things of God and the secrets of holy living, and through the fervour of his appeal clearing our duller apprehension, quickening our conscience, and illuminating the dark recesses of our spirits. Through this quickening we become conscious of a witness within, an inner Word answering to the Word without, a living and Divine authority within our own souls. Thus the highest function of the prophet is fulfilled, and we see how untrue it is that the authority of our leader is destroyed unless we bind ourselves to every reported utterance; for the beatitudes have lost none of their charm because we disbelieve in demons; and the parable of the prodigal son has not become foolishness because we think that David was not the author of the 110th Psalm. These difficulties are purely theoretical, and have no existence for him whose fellowship is with Christ, and who finds his authority in the spirit, not in the letter.

These remarks suggest a peculiarity of Christ's teaching which separates him, not indeed from the prophets of Israel, but from other founders of religion, and places him in sharp antagonism to the bulk of Christendom. His teaching has sometimes been spoken of as 'a new law,' and it may be so spoken of in a figurative sense. But the expression is misleading; for he lays down no law, and his precepts bear no resemblance to the precise enactments of a statute-book. He does not promulgate as binding on his followers either a system of theology or a moral or ceremonial code. We may find in his words materials for these things; but he himself leaves them to the free working of the intellect, and confines his endeavours to implanting great principles of thought and action. In setting forth Divine truth he appeals to the deepest intuitions in the spirit of man, and calls for genuine devoutness and love, but shows not the slightest regard for those metaphysical questions which have usurped the throne of Christianity, and driven the soul of Christ into a new Gethsemane. In his moral exhortations he appeals to the noblest dispositions, and illustrates



their action by suitable examples ; but he does not formulate rules by which a man might be judged in a court of justice, and he treats with scorn the fulfilment of a legal duty as a substitute for the exercise of love. Having planted a seed of Divine life in the heart, he would leave it to its own free development ; and accordingly a true disciple of Christ cannot be known by his believing or doing certain things, but only by the signs of an indwelling life with God, whereby the will is surrendered in filial love, and the whole course of the outward life is shaped and coloured by the ideal of the Son of God within. It is, then, we repeat, by thus reaching the deepest recesses of the soul, and wakening there the dormant sense of its relation to God, that Christ fulfils the highest function of the prophet.

## 2. Sacerdotal Office

The priestly functions of Christ are usually divided into his self-sacrifice and his intercession. We must once more remark that we are now dealing with figurative terms. Not only did Christ not belong to the priestly line, but the whole tenor of his teaching is opposed to the sacerdotal conception of religion. Accordingly he is nowhere spoken of as a priest in the New Testament except in the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews ; and there the reason is sufficiently plain. The object of the writer is to show that the Jewish ceremonial system is abolished, but abolished only because it has received its spiritual fulfilment. There were to be no more priests, because Jesus had realized the underlying idea of priesthood ; and there were to be no more sacrifices, because they were mere shadowy representations of true sacrifice, and this had been offered by Christ. Hence Christians generally are described elsewhere as a 'royal' or 'holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices.'<sup>1</sup> But to those who have been trained in a spiritual Christianity the idea of priesthood has

<sup>1</sup> I Peter ii. 5, 9. Compare Rev. i. 6, v. 10, xx. 6.

ceased to convey the impression of the highest and purest religious sanctity. The priest stood between the people and God, and observed for them ceremonies which they were not competent to observe for themselves ; but those who worship the Father in spirit and in truth have none between, but offer their own prayer, and receive a direct answer in their own hearts. Hence the habitual description of Christ as a priest would not only be untrue historically, but would be misleading spiritually by suggesting a doctrine of mediation which is quite antithetic to Christian thought. If Christ is a mediator, it is as one who brings God and man into intimate union, not as one who, recognizing their inevitable separation, acts as an intervening channel of communication.<sup>1</sup>

The case is altered, however, when we come to the word 'sacrifice' ; for though this too is figurative, we cannot dispense with it, as no other word conveys the necessary ideas. That the expression is figurative even when applied to Christ is obvious ; for an animal sacrifice was slain by a priest, and offered upon an altar, whereas Christ was put to death upon a cross by Roman soldiers. It is important to remember this, because the misapplication of figurative language is a fruitful source of error, tempting men to extend the meaning of the metaphor far beyond the real ground of comparison. At a time when sacrifices formed universally an essential part of national worship, the use of the figure was exceedingly natural ; and especially a body of men who abolished sacrifices altogether, as belonging to an unspiritual stage of religion, would easily contract the habit of saying that *their* sacrifices consisted of such and such things. Thus, as we have seen, I Peter speaks of offering spiritual sacrifices ; and Justin Martyr says that prayers and thanksgivings are the only perfect and acceptable sacrifices to God.<sup>2</sup> It is

<sup>1</sup> Outside of Hebrews Jesus is called *μεσίτης* only once in the New Testament, I Tim. ii. 5. In Heb. he is one who mediated a new covenant, viii. 6, ix. 15, xii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Dial.* 117.



therefore not surprising that Christ, having been slain at the Passover, is spoken of as the Christians' Passover,<sup>1</sup> and that his death is occasionally referred to as a sacrifice; indeed it is rather surprising how seldom this is done outside the Epistle to the Hebrews. But the figure is by no means confined to Christ. If he was a sacrifice, so are our bodies to be offered as 'a living sacrifice.'<sup>2</sup> If Christ was an offering and sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour,<sup>3</sup> so too was the present sent by the Philippians to Paul.<sup>4</sup> The writings of the Fathers contain numerous examples of sacrificial language which is obviously used in a figurative sense. The Christian sacrifices, altars, and temples were all spiritual, in marked contrast with the literal and material offerings and buildings of heathen worship.<sup>5</sup> This figure of speech has remained down to our own time, and indeed has passed so completely into common use that we are hardly conscious of its figurative character. The reason probably is that the word enshrines some idea of permanent value which we cannot otherwise express so well. We must continue, therefore, to speak of the sacrifice or self-sacrifice of Christ, and it will be our duty to try and ascertain the true and lasting significance of this expression, neither emptying the word of any necessary meaning, nor straining the figure beyond its legitimate application.

The readiness with which the strong emotions of reverent love and pity express themselves in the figurative language of sacrifice receives instructive illustration in the accounts of the murder of Thomas à Becket. Grim speaks of him as 'the sacrificial lamb of God.'<sup>6</sup> Herbert says 'he offered

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7. He is frequently referred to by ecclesiastical writers as the true paschal lamb.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. v. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Philip. iv. 18.

<sup>5</sup> The whole evidence is carefully presented by Dr. Franz Wieland, *Mensa und Confessio*, 1906. See especially pp. 38 sqq., 110, 113.

<sup>6</sup> 'Agnum Dei immolandum.' Quoted by Dr. E. A. Abbott in his *St. Thomas of Canterbury, his Death and Miracles*, 2 Vols., 1898, I, p. 128.

himself up a living sacrifice to God.'<sup>1</sup> Anonymous IV describes him as 'offering himself as a holocaust to the Lord.'<sup>2</sup> And the *Saga* makes a remarkable addition: 'as if he were offering himself in prayer a living sacrifice, as one who died in order to redeem the human race.'<sup>3</sup> No one supposes that such phrases are meant to formulate a dogma. It is only to the writers of the New Testament that the passionate glow of figurative language is to be denied.

A few random instances will illustrate modern usage. Prescott speaks of the sister of Louis XI as 'sacrificing the interests of the nation to her prejudices.'<sup>4</sup> An Indian gentleman, writing about the death of the Rev. S. Fletcher Williams, says that the latter 'made himself a sacrifice to the cause of religion and culture in India.'<sup>5</sup> The Rev. F. L. Hosmer writes, in his hymn to his country—

'For thee our fathers suffered,  
For thee they toiled and prayed,  
Upon thy holy altar  
Their willing lives they laid.'

Mr. G. M. Trevelyan, speaking of the death of Anzani, says he 'joined feebly in the chant with the young generation who were hastening as willing victims to a more conspicuous, but not a more noble, sacrifice';<sup>6</sup> and again, referring to the unsuccessful defence of Rome in 1849, he writes, 'But in order that men may aspire, it is necessary that they should have something to remember. And so the sacrifice made on the third of June, and in the month that followed, of so many of the best lives that Italy could give, had great political, because it had great spiritual, significance. The noblest Italians had recognized the eternal law of sacrifice, which Mazzini had first taught them to

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> I, p. 161.

<sup>3</sup> I, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup> *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella*, III, p. 309, ed. 1851.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Mr. B. Nath Sen, 12 December, 1901, quoted in *The Inquirer* 4 January, 1902, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic*, 1907, p. 41.



apply to their own politics. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die—it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."<sup>1</sup> Such passages may illustrate some of the sayings in the New Testament, for the Apostles too were not cold writers of dogma, but men with burning memories and emotions and enthusiastic aims.

Another figure which was also very naturally used at a time when slavery was of almost universal prevalence, was that of redemption or ransom. This figure, like that of sacrifice, has not disappeared from modern use. For instance Mrs. Humphry Ward speaks of 'towns which had each of them given their sons to the Austrian bullet and the Austrian lash, for the ransom of Italy.'<sup>2</sup> Mr. Trevelyan, in the work already cited, speaks of Garibaldi as 'the redeemer of Italy,'<sup>3</sup> and, referring to the patriots who followed him, says, 'It was here that Italy bought Rome at the price of their blood.'<sup>4</sup> No one is misled by such metaphors in ordinary speech; and it is well to notice this kind of usage, as it may render us a little less dull in understanding the language of religion. A ransom (λύτρον) was the price paid for delivering anyone from captivity. The word might be applied metaphorically to an expiatory sacrifice; but in fact it never is so applied in the LXX,<sup>5</sup> and therefore we must not, unless the occasion requires it, mix up in our minds two metaphors, sacrifice and redemption, which properly belong to two totally different regions of thought. The words connected with ransom passed into such common use that, like the language of sacrifice, they almost lost their figurative character, and came to denote any kind of deliverance. There are several examples in the LXX, and in the New Testament we may refer to Luke i. 68, 'He visited and made redemption for his people'; ii. 38, 'waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem'; xxi. 28, 'lift up your heads, because your redemption draws nigh';

<sup>1</sup> p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> *Lady Rose's Daughter*, p. 356.

<sup>3</sup> p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> So says Grimm, *Inst. The.*, p. 371; note.

xxiv. 21, ' We were hoping that he was the one who is going to redeem Israel ' ; Acts vii. 35, ' him [Moses] God sent as both a ruler and redeemer.' In the application of this figure to the work of Christ its most significant expression is ascribed to Christ himself :—' The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many'<sup>1</sup>—an expression which is only once repeated, with a slight variation, in the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly disciples are said to be ransomed or redeemed by him from all iniquity<sup>3</sup> or from the vain manner of life handed down from their fathers;<sup>4</sup> and this redemption, since it had not to be repeated, like the Levitical sacrifices, is spoken of as eternal.<sup>5</sup> The redemption brought by Christ is referred to in several other passages, which need not be cited in detail.<sup>6</sup> It is owing to this figure that Christ is called pre-eminently the ' Redeemer '—a title, however, which is nowhere given to him in the New Testament, where the word occurs only once, and then is applied to Moses.<sup>7</sup>

These figures of speech, then, resting on the experience of spiritual deliverance in the hearts of the first disciples, and borrowed from a state of society which has passed away, furnished the principal raw material for the construction of future dogma. And now, before proceeding further, let us ask whether there is really any problem to be solved in connexion with the death of Christ. So long as men believe that God himself was hypostatically united to a man in order to die, they must necessarily seek for some reason of vast import to explain so momentous an event. ' Why did God become man ? ' is a question that cannot be evaded ;

<sup>1</sup> Λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν, Matt. xx. 28 ; Mark x. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Ὁ δοὺς ἑαυτὸν ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων. I Tim. ii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Titus ii. 14.                      <sup>4</sup> I Pet. i. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. ix. 12, where the two figures of sacrifice and redemption are combined, as they are also in the passage in I Pet.

<sup>6</sup> Ἀπολύτρωσις, Rom. iii. 24, viii. 23 ; I Cor. i. 30 ; Eph. i. 7, 14, iv. 30 ; Col. i. 14 ; Heb. ix. 15, xi. 35.

<sup>7</sup> Λυτρωτής, Acts vii. 35.



and unless an adequate reason can be given, the foundations of that doctrine itself must appear very insecure. But if the hypostatical union be denied, is there no problem left? The historical fact remains, that Christ died for sin, and yet not on account of his own sin; and it is surely strange, if any Divine providence rules over the world, that the greatest and holiest of men should have been judicially murdered by the most strictly religious men in his nation. It is strange too that Socrates should have been poisoned, and the noble army of martyrs consigned to a torturing death. Are these things merely a tormenting riddle, tempting us to deny the reality of providence, or can we find in the death of Jesus some great spiritual law, under which it was needful that the Christ should suffer, and which sheds a sanctifying light upon inferior martyrdoms? These are the questions which doctrines of atonement endeavour to answer.

This problem must have pressed with peculiar force upon the first disciples; for it was contrary to all expectation that the Messiah, instead of being a triumphant king, should have been delivered over to an ignominious death. Yet we seek in vain for any distinct and complete doctrine propounded in explanation of the mystery. It is true that a very precise theory has been ascribed to the Apostle Paul; but it is reached only by forcing into his words a great deal more than they actually express, and it is founded on a few passages, of which the meaning is obscure and open to different interpretations. We do find, however, some large and leading ideas, which must have been sufficient to satisfy the perplexity of believers. Christ's death was in some sense a sacrifice. As such it was a propitiation for our sins.<sup>1</sup> It was offered for the sake of others. Christ is frequently said to have suffered or died for us, that is on our behalf (*ὑπέρ*); and similarly disciples are said to suffer for him,<sup>2</sup> and as he laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.<sup>3</sup> His death was in

<sup>1</sup> Only in I John ii. 2, iv. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Philip. i. 29.

<sup>3</sup> I John iii. 16.

some way connected with deliverance from, and the forgiveness of, sins.<sup>1</sup> It was a manifestation of his love.<sup>2</sup> It had its source in the love of God.<sup>3</sup> It revealed a principle of righteousness which was antithetic to the righteousness of the law, and thereby released men from subjection to the law.<sup>4</sup> Its object was that, having died to sins, we should live to righteousness.<sup>5</sup> The secret of eternal life is self-denying love.<sup>6</sup> The gospel was summed up in 'a Christ crucified,'<sup>7</sup> the highest among men seeking nothing for himself, but through love stooping to the death of a slave, and thereby not incurring ignominy, but reaching the Divinest glory.<sup>8</sup> To be truly great is to serve greatly, through the energy of love. Such were the thoughts, such the revolution in the conception of life, which arose in contemplating the death of Christ. While treated as quite exceptional in its scope, it is regarded as the revelation of a law of life, to which the disciple must submit himself; and in one of the most doctrinal passages it is introduced, not as a tremendous exception, at which we can only gaze without any thought of participation, but as an example which is to be followed by the afflicted Christian.<sup>9</sup>

It is remarkable that the doctrinal explanation of Christ's sufferings was allowed for so many centuries to remain in this vague condition, and indeed has never been reduced to formal dogma by the Catholic Church. Origen says nothing about it in the summary of ecclesiastical doctrine which he gives in the Preface to his *De Principiis*. It is accordingly absent from the Apostles' Creed. In the Nicene Creed it is said that Christ came down and was incarnate

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 8-10; I Cor. xv. 3; I Pet. ii. 24; I John i. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. ii. 20; I John iii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> John iii. 16; Rom. v. 8; I John iv. 10 and 16, compared with iii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. iii. 20, 21, and Paul's whole exposition of this subject.

<sup>5</sup> I Pet. ii. 24, and wherever the subject is referred to.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. xvi. 24-26; John xii. 24, 25; I Cor. xiii.; I John iii. 14.

<sup>7</sup> I Cor. i. 23.

<sup>8</sup> Philip. ii. 5-11.

<sup>9</sup> I Pet. ii. 21-25.



‘for us men and for our salvation’;<sup>1</sup> and in the form adopted at Constantinople the words are added, ‘and crucified for us under Pontius Pilate.’<sup>2</sup> The Athanasian Creed is equally vague, ‘Who suffered for our salvation.’ Belief in a fixed doctrine of atonement, then, has formed no part of Christianity through the greater portion of its history, and accordingly speculation was allowed to exercise itself freely on this difficult subject.

It was natural that the sacrificial idea of propitiation should be retained. This idea, however, was not limited to the death of Christ, but was recognized as a spiritual law which comprehended all martyrdoms. This is explained very fully by Origen. In speaking of the Levitical sacrifices he selects the lamb as prefiguring ‘the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.’ But other animals, rams, calves, goats, were used in sacrifice; and these may refer to other persons who confer some purification upon mankind.<sup>3</sup> As our Lord and Saviour, being offered in sacrifice, procured remission of sins for the whole world, so perhaps the blood of other saints and just persons was poured out for a partial expiation of the people. If there had been no sin, it would not have been necessary for the Son of God to become a lamb, and be slain in the flesh; but sin requires propitiation, and this cannot be made except through a victim; and since there are various kinds of sin, different sorts of victims are ordered. Further on he says that as the lamb has come who is alone sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, other victims [that is, in the literal sense] have ceased, and we offer the spiritual sacrifices of a contrite spirit.<sup>4</sup> The resemblance between Christ’s and other martyrdoms is

<sup>1</sup> Δι’ ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν.

<sup>2</sup> Σταυρωθέντα τε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν.

<sup>3</sup> This is qualified by the words ‘per meritum sanguinis Christi’; but these words are wanting in two manuscripts, and there is nothing like them in the rest of the discussion, so that they may perhaps be regarded as a note added by some transcriber.

<sup>4</sup> *Hom. in Num.* xxiv. 1, preserved in the Latin translation of Rufinus.

carried through in a remarkable passage in the *Exhortatio ad Martyrium*<sup>1</sup> :—‘ Perhaps, as we were bought by the precious blood of Jesus, Jesus having taken the name which is above every name, so some will be bought by the precious blood of the martyrs, who themselves will be more exalted than they would have been exalted if they had been just, but not martyrs ;<sup>2</sup> for it is reasonable that death by martyrdom should be called exaltation, as is evident from the saying, “ If I be exalted from the earth, I will draw all men to myself.” Let us, therefore, also glorify, having exalted God by our own death ; since he who is martyred glorifies God by his death, as we have learned from John when he said, “ These things he said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God.” ’

When from the sacrificial figure we turn to that of a ransom, we find it frequently held that the ransom was paid to the devil, who held men in captivity. It was out of love to man that God gave Jesus up to the devil, and the latter being deceived was obliged to liberate those who were willing to follow Christ.<sup>3</sup> This view was held, with more or less modification, for centuries, and was sometimes expressed in language not too refined. For instance Cyril of Jerusalem says, ‘ It was necessary for the Lord to suffer for us. But the devil would not have dared to approach if he had known him ; “ for if they had known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” Therefore the body became a bait for death, in order that the dragon, having hoped to swallow it, might vomit out also those who had been already swallowed.’<sup>4</sup> Gregory of Nyssa justifies the deception by the

<sup>1</sup> § 50, preserved in Greek.

<sup>2</sup> The reading is uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> See Origen, *Com. in Matt.*, Tom. xiii. 8, 9, xvi. 8 ; *in Rom.* iii. 7, iv. 11. It is by no means suggested that this was the whole, or even a large part, of the patristic view of the efficacy of Christ’s death. See some valuable remarks and quotations in the Supplementary Chapter of Dr. Moberly’s *Atonement and Personality*.

<sup>4</sup> *Catech.* xii. 15.



plea that the deceiver deserved to be deceived, and that the object was beneficent, including the devil himself in the healing and purifying results.<sup>1</sup> The general idea of atonement was elaborated with considerable fulness by various writers ; but to follow these in detail belongs to the history of doctrine rather than our present subject.

We must, however, make an exception of Anselm on account of the celebrity and permanent influence of the treatise in which his views are unfolded. He wrote the *Cur Deus homo* in order to show the accordance of the Catholic faith with the demands of reason. The articles of faith are stated in the simplest words : God was made man, and by his death restored life to the world ; and the problem is, to show that this was a rational necessity. It is assumed that death entered among mankind through the disobedience of man, sin being the cause of our condemnation ; and the restoration of the blessings which were thus lost is due to the ineffable height of God's compassion and love. But why could not this restoration have been effected by simpler means ? The old answer is rejected, that it was necessary to proceed against the devil by justice, and not by force, so that when the devil slew him in whom there was no cause of death he justly lost his power over sinners. But justice could not require God to refrain from punishing his servant who had misled his fellow-servant ; and though man was justly tormented by the devil, the devil was unjust in tormenting him, for in doing so he acted, not from love of justice, but from malice.

A preliminary objection to the whole doctrine is answered by the remark that the Divine nature was impassible, and therefore could suffer no humiliation ; but as the two natures were united in one person, it followed that, when God was said to suffer anything lowly or infirm, this must not be understood according to the sublimity of the impassible nature, but according to the infirmity of the human sub-

<sup>1</sup> *Cat. Orat.* 26.

stance. Therefore by the incarnation there was no humiliation of God, but human nature was exalted. Another objection is that there was no justice in delivering up the justest of men to death for a sinner. To this Anselm replies that God did not deliver the innocent to death for the guilty, but Christ submitted himself to death of his own accord, in order to save men. He was slain because he persisted in living and speaking truth and righteousness, and this is the obedience which God exacts from every rational creature. But God did not exact Christ's death ; for death is the penalty of sin, and Christ was without sin. The will to suffer was indeed derived from the Father ; but this did not imply compulsion, but the spontaneous firmness of an accepted purpose, and what pleased the Father was not the suffering, but the will to suffer.<sup>1</sup>

Having removed these preliminary difficulties, Anselm proceeds to his main problem. It is universally held that man was made for blessedness ; and no one can attain to this unless his sins be remitted. The question therefore is how God remits the sins of men ; and in order to answer this question we must consider what it is to sin, and what it is to make satisfaction for sin. Sin consists in not rendering

<sup>1</sup> This most important statement has, I think, been too much overlooked. Stevens, for instance, says, referring to Grotius, 'For him as for Anselm it is sin which compels the Almighty to subject his Son to the most bitter tortures in order that his condemnation of it may be asserted and displayed.' *The Christian Doctrine of Salvation*, pp. 252 sq. Anselm says, 'Non ergo coegit deus Christum mori, . . . sed ipse sponte sustinuit mortem' (I, ix.). 'Cum videmus aliquem fortiter pati velle molestiam, ut perficiat quod bene vult ; quamvis fateamur nos velle, ut illam poenam sustineat, non tamen volumus aut amamus poenam ejus, sed voluntatem. . . . Patri filii voluntas placuit . . . quamvis poenam ejus non amaret' (I, x.). There is an interesting parallel among the Bábís. Behá'u'lláh, referring to martyrdom, and speaking apparently in the name of God, says, 'O Son of Man ! By my Splendour ! Thy will to tinge thy hair with thy blood is dearer to Me than the two realms of the universe, than the brilliance of the two Great Lights.' Translated from the Arabic in the *Life and Teaching of Abbas Effendi*, by Myron H. Phelps, 1903, p. 245.



to God that which is due (*debitum*), and what is due is, to be subject to the will of God. This is the sole and complete honour which we owe to God, and which God exacts from us. In not rendering this honour man takes from God that which belongs to him; and as long as he does not pay what he has taken he remains in guilt. It is true that, in relation to himself alone, nothing can be really added to or taken from the honour of God; but man, by disobedience, disturbs the order and beauty of the universe, and, in relation to this, dishonours God, though he cannot injure or stain God's power and dignity. Satisfaction consists in the restoration to God of the honour which the sinner has in this way taken from him, together with some compensation for the insult. Now, it would not be agreeable to the Divine nature to remit sin through compassion alone; for this would be a departure from right order, and would leave no distinction between one who sinned and one who did not sin. From this and other considerations it follows that all sin must be succeeded by either satisfaction or punishment; and though it is true that *we* are required simply to forgive those who sin against us, this is because the right of punishment belongs to God alone, and to those whom he has ordained for the purpose.

The next step in the argument is connected with an ancient belief, and is very curious.<sup>1</sup> Rational beings, who

<sup>1</sup> See IV Ezra iv. 36, 37, 'Unto them [the souls of the righteous] Jeremiel the archangel gave answer and said, Even when the number is fulfilled of them that are like unto you. For he hath weighed the world in the balance; and by measure hath he measured the times, and by number hath he numbered the seasons; and he shall not move nor stir them, until the said measure be fulfilled.' Compare Rev. vi. 9-11, where the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God are told 'that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled.' See also Augustine, *De Civ. Dei* xxii. 1, 'tantum populum gratia sua colligit, ut inde suppleat, et instauret partem quae lapsa est angelorum; ac sic illa dilecta et suprema Civitas non fraudetur suorum numero civium, quin etiam fortassis et uberiore laetetur.'



are to be blessed in the contemplation of God, must exist in a certain reasonable and perfect number foreknown by God. It is probable that the community of angels did not reach this perfect number ; for, if they did, and none of them had fallen, there would have been no room for man. But in any case the fallen angels left a gap in this number, which must be filled, and may be more than filled, by the elect among mankind. The men thus selected must be on an equality with the unfallen angels ; but a man who had sinned, and given no satisfaction, could not be equal to an angel who had not sinned ; nor indeed could he be restored even to that degree of blessedness which he had before he sinned. Hence satisfaction became a necessity. Now, the satisfaction ought to be proportioned to the measure of the sin. But this can never be made by man. For, in the first place, we can give nothing to God which we do not owe, and therefore nothing which can be any satisfaction for past sin. Secondly, supposing we could give anything, it could not be proportioned to the quantity of sin ; for we ought not to act contrary to the will of God for the whole universe. Therefore we cannot satisfy God unless we can render to him something greater than the universe. And again, man dishonoured God by obeying the devil, and now he is unable to honour him by conquering the devil, because he has become weak and mortal and born in sin. This impotence is no excuse, because it is self-caused, and consequently man remains unjust in not restoring to God what he owes. An unjust person cannot be admitted to blessedness ; and so, if no other satisfaction can be made, the determined celestial state cannot be completed.

The ground is thus prepared for the great conclusion. Man was created just, in order that he might be blessed in the enjoyment of God, and therefore he would not have died if he had not sinned. Now, God must perfect what he has begun, but cannot do so without that complete satisfaction which man cannot render. This necessity does not abolish



grace, because the necessity lies only in the immutable goodness of God. God's beneficent purpose, then, cannot be carried out unless some one pays for man's sin something greater than everything which is other than God ; and no one can do this who is not himself greater than all which is not God. If, then, no one can pay except God, and no one owes the debt except man, the satisfaction must be made by a God-Man. Hence the necessity for the two natures in one person. It was suited to his dignity that he should be born from a virgin ; and he did not derive from her a taint of sin, because she had had faith in her future son, and so shared the benefits of his satisfaction. The three persons of the Trinity could not assume one and the same man into a unity of person, and therefore the incarnation necessarily took place in the case of one person only. This person, again, had to be the second ; for if it had been either of the others, there would have been two sons in the Trinity, one who was such prior to the incarnation, and the other become such through the incarnation, and consequently lower in dignity, which would have been inconsistent with the perpetual equality of the persons. And further, if the Father had become incarnate, there would have been two grandsons in the Trinity ; for the Father would have been grandson of the parents of the virgin through the assumed humanity, and the Word, though having nothing from man, would have been grandson of the virgin, as being the son of her son : and such things would be incongruous.

Owing to his Divine nature, Christ was without sin, and therefore was under no obligation to die ; for mortality, which is due to sin, does not belong to the essence of man. It follows that, in laying down his life for the honour of God, he rendered what God could not exact from him as a debt. This, then, is the satisfaction of which we are in search. For no one would knowingly injure Christ's person even to save an infinite number of worlds ; and thus it appears that his life is more lovable than sins are hateful, and is able

to pay for the sins of the whole world. Those who slew him are not excluded, for they knew not what they did, and so did not fall into that infinite sin with which no others can be compared. His death was for the honour of God, because it was incurred on account of the righteousness which he obediently observed, and he therefore gave an example to men that they ought not, owing to any inconveniences, to depart from the righteousness which they owe to God ; and though other men have bravely borne death for the sake of truth, no other, in giving up his life, rendered to God what he would not at some time necessarily have lost, or paid what he did not owe.

Here a formidable objection is very clearly stated. In dying and setting an example, Christ did what was better and more pleasing to God ; and was not that, by its nature, a duty ? The reply is that sometimes one of two things is better, and yet is not definitely exacted ; so that, whichever a man does, it is said that he ought to do what he does, but, if he does what is better, he has a reward, because he gives spontaneously that which is his own. An example, to make this position clear, is taken from celibacy and marriage. The former being better than the latter, but not a duty, a man who observes it expects a reward for the spontaneous gift which he offers to God. Christ's great gift, then, spontaneously offered to God, ought to be rewarded. But payment could not be made to himself, because he required neither a gift nor a remission ; and it must accordingly be made to some one else. This other must be one to whom the Son, who has earned the reward, wishes it to be paid ; and who could this be but mankind, for whom he made himself man, and to whom he gave an example of dying for righteousness ? For men would imitate him in vain unless they were partakers of his merit. The reward therefore was that the debt which they owed for sin should be dismissed. It could not be extended to the fallen angels ; for they could not be redeemed except through an Angel-God,



and moreover they are not all sprung from one angel, as all men are sprung from one man.

The influence of this remarkable treatise is apparent in the later dogmatic statements, though it must be observed that some of these retain a good deal of the primitive vagueness, while others introduce repulsive features which are wholly wanting in Anselm.

The doctrine of the Catholic Church, though never framed into a dogma, is stated with high authority in the *Catechismus Romanus*. Satisfaction is there defined as 'the complete payment of something which is due,'<sup>1</sup> or, in other words, 'compensation for an injury inflicted on another'; and in theology it is used to denote that compensation 'when man pays anything to God for the sins which he has committed.' The primary satisfaction is that whereby Christ 'on the cross most fully satisfied God by paying the price for our sins.' This is the plenary satisfaction for all sins committed in this world, by the weight of which the actions of men have the greatest value with God, and without which they are esteemed of no worth.<sup>2</sup> The necessity for 'canonical satisfaction,' for sins knowingly committed after baptism, is not thereby precluded; but the efficacy of prayers, fasting, and alms-giving, prescribed for this purpose by the Church, depends wholly on the merits of Christ's passion.<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere it is stated, as among the benefits of Christ's passion, that 'he paid the penalty due to our sins,' and that 'no sacrifice could have been offered more pleasing and acceptable to God.'<sup>4</sup>

The doctrine of the Church of England is of uncertain import, for it does not explain the meaning of sacrifice, or its mode of operation. It teaches that Christ 'truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt

<sup>1</sup> 'Rei debitae integra solutio.'

<sup>2</sup> Pars II, cap. V, §§ lxxxv. sqq.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* §§ lxxxviii. sq.

<sup>4</sup> Pars I, cap. V, xxiii., *tertium* and *quartum*.

but also for all actual sins of men,'<sup>1</sup> and that 'He came to be the Lamb without spot, who, by sacrifice of himself once made, should take away the sins of the world.'<sup>2</sup> We should observe that the effect of the sacrifice is made universal, as it is also by the Catholics. This feature disappears from the more rigid and precise Westminster Confession :—'The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him.'<sup>3</sup> The effect of this sacrifice is expressly limited to 'the elect only,' while all others are ordained 'to dishonour and wrath for their sins,' to the praise of God's glorious justice.<sup>4</sup> 'Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those who are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf.'<sup>5</sup> We must add that, having 'felt and borne the weight of God's wrath, he laid down his life an offering for sin';<sup>6</sup> and 'it was requisite that the Mediator should be God, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God.'<sup>7</sup> In order to exhibit the full result of the sacrifice, we must trespass on the doctrine of justification :—'Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone: not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to them as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith: which

<sup>1</sup> 2nd Article.<sup>2</sup> 15th Article.<sup>3</sup> Chap. VIII, § v.<sup>4</sup> Chap. III, §§ vi., vii.<sup>5</sup> Chap. XI, § iii.<sup>6</sup> *Larger Cat.*, 49.<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 38.



faith they have not of themselves ; it is the gift of God. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification ; yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.’<sup>1</sup>

The Lutheran and Reformed Churches of the continent had promulgated the essential features of this scheme of doctrine, and we need only refer to a few special points. The Belgic Confession (drawn up in 1561, the authoritative standard of the Dutch and Belgian Reformed Churches) speaks clearly of Christ’s representative function : he constituted for eternity the supreme priest, ‘who placed himself before the Father in our name, to appease his wrath by his own full satisfaction, offering himself on the wood of the cross, and pouring out his precious blood for the purgation of our sins.’ It is no less explicit in its doctrine of substitution : ‘He paid what he had not stolen, and, the just for the unjust, suffered both in his body and in his soul, so that feeling those horrible punishments which were due to our sins he sweated as it were drops of blood flowing down to the ground, and at last exclaimed, “ my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ” And he endured all these things for the remission of our sins.’<sup>2</sup> Some of the symbolical books recognize an expiation in Christ’s life as well as in his death. This view is stated with especial clearness in the Formula of Concord.<sup>3</sup> Christ was not subject to the law, because he was Lord of the law, so that a twofold obedience is imputed to him ; not only that exhibited in his passion and death, but that whereby, of his own accord, he made himself subject to the law, and fulfilled it for our sake, so that God remits our sins on account of the total obedience which Christ rendered by acting and suffering, in life and death. These two forms of obedience are distinguished as active and

<sup>1</sup> *Confession*, Chap. XI, §§ i., ii.

<sup>2</sup> § 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Sol. Decl.*, Art. III, p. 685.

passive. The active is designated by later theologians 'legal satisfaction,' that whereby the legislative justice of God is satisfied; the passive, 'penal satisfaction,' that whereby the retributive justice of God is satisfied.<sup>1</sup> We need only add that the Lutherans maintained that the effect of the satisfaction was universal,<sup>2</sup> while the Calvinists confined it to the elect.

As preparing the way for some later doctrines we must for a moment retrace our steps, and notice a difference between the views of Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus. The former maintained that Christ offered to God more than a recompense for the entire offence of mankind, so that his passion was not only a sufficient, but superabundant satisfaction for sins. Duns Scotus, on the other hand, affirmed that the merit was certainly finite; for Christ suffered, not as God, but as man. His merit, therefore, availed just so far as it was accepted by God, since indeed the Divine acceptance is the chief cause and reason of all merit.<sup>3</sup> The view of Thomas was ratified by Clement VI in the Bull 'Unigenitus Dei filius,' in the year 1342.<sup>4</sup> At an earlier period in the Middle Ages it was still possible to hold a simply ethical doctrine. Peter Lombard asks, how are we freed from sins through the death of Christ? He answers, because through it the love of God towards us is made manifest, in giving up his Son to death for us sinners. By this love we are moved and kindled to the love of God, and through this we are justified, that is, being freed from sins we are made just. The death of Christ, therefore, justifies us while through it love is excited in our hearts.<sup>5</sup> Abélard had already dwelt on this mode of justification.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Grimm, *Inst. The.*, pp. 368 sq.

<sup>2</sup> Clearly affirmed in the *Formula of Concord, Epitome*, Art. XI, p. 621; *Sol. Decl.*, p. 802.

<sup>3</sup> The passages are quoted by Hagenbach, II, p. 287.

<sup>4</sup> Grimm, p. 380.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Hagenbach, II, p. 285.

<sup>6</sup> See the ample quotations in Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, pp. 372 sqq.



The Arminians, while retaining the notion of sacrifice, affirmed that sacrifices were not a plenary satisfaction for sin, but, when they were offered, a gratuitous remission of sin was granted. So the offering of one man was sufficient to expiate innumerable sins, not only on account of the dignity of the person, but because the Divine will required nothing further.<sup>1</sup> This Divine willingness to accept a satisfaction which in itself was insufficient was distinguished as *acceptilatio*, while *acceptatio* was the general term, denoting simply the acceptance of satisfaction.

The Socinians maintained that the ordinary doctrine was a pernicious error. Christ did not, properly speaking, pay an equivalent penalty for our sins, and make an exact compensation for our disobedience by the price of his own obedience; but he so satisfied God by his obedience that he completely fulfilled his whole will, and procured from grace, for all who believe in him, remission of sins, and eternal salvation.<sup>2</sup> In answer to the question, 'How does Jesus effect expiation of our sins, in the heavens?' it is said 'First, while he frees us from the punishment of sins by the virtue of his death, which he underwent for our sins in accordance with the will of God. For a victim so precious, and such great obedience of Christ has, before God, a perpetual power of defending from the punishments of sins us who believe in Christ, and have died with Christ that we should not live unto sins. Further, while, by the virtue and power which he has obtained full and complete from the Father, he perpetually defends us, and, in a manner, repels from us by his intervention the wrath of God, which has usually been poured forth upon the impious; which the Scripture expresses, when it says that he makes intercession for us. Secondly, he liberates us from the slavery of sins themselves, while by the same power he withdraws and recalls us from every kind of evil deeds; and that, by showing us in his own

<sup>1</sup> See the passages quoted in Winer, *Comp. Darst.*

<sup>2</sup> *Cat. Racov.*, section V, chap. 8.

person what he obtains who ceases from sinning ; or even in another way he frees us from the yoke of sin by exhorting and warning us, by giving us help, and sometimes by punishing.'<sup>1</sup>

It is no part of our task to follow various forms of doctrine which have no authority beyond that of the men who have proposed them. It may be stated, however, that an extraordinary change has taken place among the teachers of Churches which assume the reputation of orthodoxy. This appears in a very striking way in a series of articles on the Atonement contributed by various distinguished men to 'The Christian World,' from 9 November, 1899, to 1 March, 1900. While an attempt is made by a few of the writers to maintain a rather obscure doctrine of substitution, and even the penal character of Christ's death, and most are eager to declare their belief in the Atonement, the series as a whole is remarkable for its rejection, I might say its scornful rejection, of the authorized doctrine. We are told that the doctrine, or some part of it, is 'crude,' 'puerile, or immoral' (Dean Fremantle), 'fatuous and devilish' (Dr. Marcus Dods), satisfactory to 'the superstitious piety and the inferior morality of the Middle Ages,' and 'absolutely contrary to the fundamental postulates of Scripture, as well as to those of the Christian conscience' (Professor Sabatier) ; from which we may see that the 'ghastliness of this appalling doctrine' (Rev. B. J. Snell) is condemned in no measured terms by men whom one would expect to be its supporters. I will add one other testimony. Dr. Moberly, in rejecting the notion that Christ endured the vengeance of God, declares it to be 'too shocking and too blasphemous even for thought.'<sup>2</sup> These, however, are the opinions of individuals, some of them excellent opinions, and admirably expressed, but, as I have said, possessing no authority. The treatise of Professor G. B. Stevens on 'The Christian Doctrine of Salvation,' published in the 'International Theological Library,' argues

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, section VI.

<sup>2</sup> *Atonement and Personality*, 1901, p. 132



powerfully against the traditional theology, and follows, though possibly without the knowledge of the author, the familiar lines of Unitarian teaching. One passage may be quoted:—‘The old theories of atonement are not built upon the Christian concept of God. They were constructed without any study of the history and contents of that concept. They are *a priori*, speculative, arbitrary constructions, with no proper basis in exegesis or history. The most extreme of these forms of thought—the penal satisfaction theory—is built up in violation and defiance of the biblical concept of God. Its definitions negative point-blank the conclusions of the most capable and unprejudiced exegesis.’<sup>1</sup> We must, however, confine our survey to the doctrine which has the support of ecclesiastical sanction.<sup>2</sup>

Before attempting to draw forth some elements of spiritual truth contained in what we may call, notwithstanding its many forms, the orthodox doctrine of Atonement, we must notice the objections which seem to many to be absolutely fatal to it, considered as a whole.

In the first place, if the doctrine of the hypostatic union be denied, that of the Atonement is necessarily discarded. For, however exalted, in this case, the human nature of Jesus might be, it would not have become one person with God; and so the fact of death could not be extended beyond the human nature, and receive the infinite value which the hypothesis requires. This is, of course, admitted; for the transference of the human suffering to the Divine nature through the unity of the person is insisted upon as essential in every form of the doctrine; and it seems clear that the martyrdom of a man, however perfect and sinless, could be no adequate compensation for the sins of countless millions.

Secondly, the fundamental assumption that God cannot forgive men, unless he has first received a satisfaction which

<sup>1</sup> pp. 283 sq.

<sup>2</sup> A survey and criticism of some modern works may be found in Stevens. The great work of Ritschl has probably had the widest influence.



men cannot render, is quite contrary to Christ's teaching. We have already endeavoured to show, on philosophical grounds, that it is possible and right for God to forgive under certain conditions ; and now we must point out that this is what Christ taught. In the Lord's Prayer we ask for forgiveness ; but there is not a word about an atoning representative. We plead simply that we too have forgiven. A forgiving temper and repentance are the conditions which Christ lays down for the enjoyment of Divine forgiveness. In the parable of the two debtors, the creditor, when they had nothing to pay, frankly, or graciously, forgave them both.<sup>1</sup> In the parable of the unforgiving servant, the Lord forgives the non-payment of an enormous debt out of simple compassion, because the debtor entreated him, and withdraws his mercy only when the servant proved that he himself was relentless and cruel.<sup>2</sup> In the parable of the prodigal son, no one even goes to seek for the wanderer, but he returns of himself, and the father, the moment he sees him, runs to welcome and forgive him.<sup>3</sup> In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, the latter only smites upon his breast, and entreats God to be propitious to him ; and he went to his house justified.<sup>4</sup> There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.<sup>5</sup> This teaching is perfectly clear and simple, and the unsophisticated heart immediately responds to it. The attempt to evade its force by assuming that Christ presupposed the Atonement in all these sayings strikes me as grossly irreverent ; and if there is really such a thing as heresy, a *choosing* of one's own opinions, and thrusting them into the face of Christ, this is surely an instance of it. The effect of his constant teaching is in no way impaired by the comparison of his death to a ransom, the price paid to deliver men from sin, or of the shedding of his blood to the sacrifice whereby the new covenant was ratified. These are figures perfectly suited

<sup>1</sup> Ἐχαρίσατο. Luke vii. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xviii. 23 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xv. 11 sqq.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xviii. 10 sqq.

<sup>5</sup> Luke xv. 10.



to the circumstances, and no one would think of misunderstanding them if he did not come to them with his mind full of prepossession.

Matthew, indeed, in the account of the last supper adds the words 'for the remission of sins';<sup>1</sup> but these words are open to critical suspicion, because they are not found in the parallel passages in Mark xiv. 24, Luke xxii. 20, and Paul, I Corinthians xi. 25. But if we regard them as a genuine saying of Christ's, still they only serve to connect the remission of sins with the initiation of the new covenant through the shedding of his blood.<sup>2</sup> Luke<sup>3</sup> represents Christ as saying, after his resurrection, that 'repentance for remission of sins (or, according to another reading, "repentance and remission") should be preached among all the Gentiles.' This was an essential part of the new covenant: the past was to be, as it were, blotted out, and the disciples of Christ were to make a fresh start, in the power of the Divine life communicated to them. This involved repentance which the offer of the new covenant was calculated to awaken. Few, if any, suppose that Christ regarded his own life and death as having no immediate connexion with the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth, and as having no avail with men to produce 'repentance for the remission of sins.' The question is, what was the nature of this connexion?

Thirdly, the comparison of sin to a debt is pushed far beyond due limits. A real debt need not necessarily be paid by the debtor. A friend may step in, and discharge it for him; and the creditor, provided he receives the money which is due, is perfectly satisfied. But the debt of sin cannot be thus transferred; and the virtue of another can be no compensation for my wrongdoing. If I have committed a murder, nothing can alter the fact that I have outraged the Divine law, and no holiness in the mind of another can remove my guilt. The failure to perceive the personal and

<sup>1</sup> *Εἰς ἀφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.* xxvi. 28.

<sup>2</sup> See the fuller discussion in Stevens, pp. 48 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> xxiv. 47.

irremovable nature of sin is perhaps partly due to the overstraining of another analogy. A nation has a kind of corporate personality, so that an offence against a neighbouring country perpetrated by a few individuals is attributed to the nation, and may be expiated by the government acting as the nation's representative. So mankind is conceived as one, and it is thought that the sin of which mankind has been guilty may be atoned for by a representative of mankind. But though cases of outward injury may be treated in this way, the deep, inward sense of sin which Christianity awakens does not admit of this corporate responsibility. God cannot be injured, and cannot be paid. Through sin we are individually estranged from the life of God, and it is an individual fault that has to be cured. We have nothing to pay, and no payment can be made which will alter the facts. God's judgment is according to truth, and there can be no forensic pretences with him. But when the heart turns to him with penitential love, his grace is waiting to receive it. Is it, then, not true that for every sin there must be either punishment or satisfaction? It is true, except that there is no alternative. Sin must be punished; only the punishment will not be infinite torment, but be governed by the laws which we have described in a previous section. The punishment may be inward, a deep anguish of soul that we have been so unworthy; and this anguish does not diminish, but rather increases, as we rise to greater heights of spirituality, and can be finally lost only when our consciousness turns completely from self to God, and sees nothing but the glory of his love and the holiness of his will.

Fourthly, the idea of meritorious work, in the required sense is not tenable. Anselm states this objection very carefully, and answers by a plea which, if true, justifies the doctrine of works of supererogation. It is admitted that the performance of duty has no merit in the required sense: it is what the will of God demands, and what we are bound to give. But then Anselm thinks there are good works which go beyond our duty



and which therefore have real merit, as being free gifts to God, and not a rendering of what is due.<sup>1</sup> This view is tenable only if we once more regard mankind as a unity, subject to an unvarying obligation. There are undoubtedly works which go beyond the duties that are universally required ; and so, in relation to human judgment, these works may be looked upon as meritorious. But to the men who perform them they are duties ; for our duty does not lie within the commandments of a prescribed law, which lays down rules of universal obligation, but within the demands of our own conscience, where, in every individual, there is a field that lies outside the legally defined province. Woe is to Paul if he does not preach the gospel ; but not all are required to preach the gospel. And so whatever highest thing God, speaking in the conscience and the judgment, lays upon us to do, becomes for us a duty, though it may be none for our neighbour ; and it cannot be regarded as a piece of superfluous goodness, which we might have neglected without inward unfaithfulness. It is strange that many Protestants who object to the Catholic doctrine of merit nevertheless retain it in their doctrine of Atonement ; for the ' merit of Christ ' refers to the superfluous and needless goodness, which, by reason of its superfluity, placed God under a debt to him. Christ himself did not so regard it. He had received a commandment from his Father. He had a baptism to be baptized with ; and how was he straitened till it should be accomplished.

Fifthly, to inflict on the innocent the punishment due to the guilty could not satisfy any justice with which we are acquainted. Such a deed is the culmination of injustice, and could prove nothing but the lawless energy of a blind and savage vindictiveness. God the Son, who is said to have offered himself to appease this heedless wrath, would indeed

<sup>1</sup> This view is as old as Origen, who recognizes works which exceed our duty, and so make us ' good and faithful,' not ' unprofitable servants.' See *Com. in Ep. ad Rom.* III, 3, pp. 181 sq. Lom.



have earned the gratitude and love of men, rescued by such agonies from an eternal hell ; but God the Father could be only an object of terror and aversion. For this part of the doctrine, which has sometimes been expressed in language that sounds to untutored ears like revolting blasphemy, Anselm, we have observed, is not responsible. With him satisfaction is the alternative of punishment ; and Christ satisfied God, not by suffering the punishment due to the sinner, but by the holy submission of his will ; and it was through this meritorious act that he earned the salvation of those whom he represented. This differs very widely from the later Protestant view, in which the guilt of mankind is imputed to Christ, and the infinite punishment incurred by the fall is inflicted upon him, and then his righteousness is imputed to those who believe that this is so. Happily there is a growing conviction that this doctrine is opposed to the most certain dictates of morality, and is therefore untenable.

Lastly, man is not in fact a mere puppet, with no power over, or responsibility for, his own destiny. If he were, it would be a piece of monstrous injustice to punish him at all, and no atonement could be required. It is impossible to ascribe the whole of man's righteousness unconditionally to Divine grace without at the same time relieving him of all guilt for his short-comings ; and thus he ceases altogether to be a moral and responsible being. The first man, according to this view, had really some moral freedom ; but he chose wrong ; and so his descendants are an accursed race, of whom a certain number are plucked out of hell by an arbitrary act of Divine mercy. This, of course, is not the doctrine of the Catholic Church, but only of the extremer forms of evangelicalism.

For these reasons, then, I am unable to accept any of the established forms of the doctrine of Atonement. And now we may observe that those who hold the doctrine have no spiritual advantage over those who reject it. From the point of view of the latter it is an imaginary contrivance for



curing an imaginary ill. Its whole object is to enable God to be what Christ has taught us that he always is, our merciful and forgiving Father, who is ready to receive and heal the truly penitent. To the man who dreads God as an implacable judge, and does not believe Christ's assurance, the doctrine may bring relief from his superstitious terror ; but to him who believes Christ the doctrine adds nothing. He sees that still, as of yore, sin brings its heavy punishment, and that God has always dwelt in the humble and contrite heart. If it be said that at least it exhibits the immensity of Christ's love with peculiar impressiveness, and therefore appeals to the human heart with unexampled power, this may be in a sense true, and there may be coarse and undeveloped minds to whom God tortured by God for their sakes may seem an intelligible and moving spectacle. But it is a theatrical appeal to our selfish dread, and asks us to love him, not because he is transcendently lovable, but because he has plucked us out of hell, and stood between us and the just vengeance of God. The appeal of Christ's love, however, may be felt without thrusting our poor inventions into the impressive scene of Calvary, and the love of him may dwell as a deep and quiet power in hearts that have never been taught to scorn his teaching, and to sink in terror before the thought of God.

Is this doctrine, then, simply to be rejected as utterly false and unchristian ? This can hardly be ; for though men have held many strange and horrible superstitions, like the belief in witchcraft, yet a doctrine which rested on no genuine spiritual experience could hardly have taken the place which the doctrine of Atonement has occupied in Christendom. But, be this as it may, there are certain ideas which, notwithstanding its defective form, are involved in it. To these we must now attend.

First, it emphasizes the heinousness of sin as a violation of God's eternal order. In doing so it repeats the verdict of conscience, which recognizes no human convention, but a



Divine sanctity, in the moral law. It is this that makes sin the supreme evil, and brings it under the judgment of God. Here, then, we find a truth that cannot be too strongly stated ; and if the rebel against God can understand something of the Divine disapproval of sin only under the figure of wrath, it is well that he should thus fling aside the idea that God is indifferent to sin. Remorse, the horror of unrepented wickedness, involves a fearful looking for of judgment, and is the natural revelation of the Divine displeasure. The doctrine of Atonement, then, does well to lay stress on the sentiment of Paul's words, ' Be not deceived, God is not mocked ; ' but it errs in not adding, ' Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.'<sup>1</sup> The law of moral sequence is irreversible. We cannot toss off our selfishness and sensuality upon another, and thus hide from the sight of God the foul blot which we make upon the fair order of his world. There is no reconciliation except in the turning of the heart and will to God ; and it can be perfected only by the destruction of sin.

Secondly, it is true that we cannot earn God's favour by our fulfilment of the moral law. This statement involves two distinct conceptions. We cannot bring about reconciliation by mere task-work. Harmony with God does not consist in the performance of certain acts for the sake of a reward, but in an inward love and devotion, which, without thought of reward, offer themselves spontaneously to God. There must be an indwelling of Divine righteousness, a Spirit of justice, love, and holiness, which is itself the fountain of law, and of which, good deeds are the inevitable expression. But again, even this genuine fulfilment of God's will could not *earn* his favour. We owe everything to God, and cannot place him under any obligation to us. Instead, however, of accepting this as a universal truth, the doctrine of Atonement maintains that, though we cannot earn God's favour, some one else can earn it for us. The New Testament doc-

<sup>1</sup> Gal. vi. 7.



trine is that the Divine Love was never earned ; that the mission of Christ, and all its benefits, sprang from the eternal love ; and that this love, which is God's essential nature, flowed forth for ever upon the evil and upon the good, seeking to draw them to itself, and to give them the communion of sons. And if we have been endowed with the mysterious gift of freedom, so that we can stray away from God, and place ourselves in subjection to sin, and even if we can return, and seek the face of God once more, we cannot earn any part in that flood of grace which flows for ever, but only bathe ourselves in its cleansing stream, and adore that unpurchased and unpurchasable love, which is the immutable source of every blessing.

Another true conception is that of the solidarity of mankind. We are not a mass of unrelated units, but are members one of another, necessarily sharing the common life, which manifests itself not only in similar intellectual tastes and tendencies, but in kindred moral ideals, and to a large extent, in the performance of identical duties. It is therefore possible to look at a community in the mass, and judge of it as righteous or depraved. Every fine character exalts the moral average ; every wicked man debases it ; and, generally speaking, the results of moral action affect the community in accordance with the average morality. Fifty righteous men in a city noted for its vice may postpone the impending ruin ; and, on the other hand, many innocent persons suffer in the sweeping retribution that falls on a corrupt people. But these undoubted facts cannot destroy our individual responsibility, or affect our judgment of individuals when they are brought up for separate examination. We cannot admire a footpad because he declares himself a member of a noble and virtuous race ; nor do we lose our reverence for the martyr of righteousness because he dwelt in the midst of the wicked. Rather we pass a severer condemnation on him who sinks far below the standard of his people ; and we render the highest honour



to him who rises far above the ordinary level of his age and country. The solidarity of the race, therefore, ceases to be applicable precisely at the point where, in the doctrine of the Atonement, it is required to be effective.

Fourthly, there are many illustrations of what may, in a loose sense, be called vicarious suffering. For instance, a man leaps into the water to save a drowning comrade, and, while he succeeds in the attempt, perishes himself. It is needless to multiply examples ; for the suffering of one, in order to prevent or alleviate the suffering of another, is of daily occurrence, belonging, as it does, to the ordinary courtesies of life, and not infrequently reaching a tragic grandeur. But this kind of suffering for the benefit of another is not properly called vicarious. That implies a formal substitution of one man for another. For instance, if a soldier were sentenced to be shot for insubordination, and another were allowed to take his place and be shot instead of him, there would be real vicarious punishment, for the second man would be in all respects a representative and substitute for the first. But this is not the case when you simply endeavour to confer a benefit upon another, and in doing so incur suffering, even if the suffering be of the same kind as that from which you relieve the other. For instance, if in the case supposed the second soldier had only managed to conceal the first, and had then himself been discovered and shot by a sentry, his death would not have been vicarious. In such instances the bestowal of a benefit is the essential part of the act, and the suffering is purely incidental. You do not take the place of the sufferer, as one formally appointed to represent him, and your suffering is in itself no part of the benefit. In the case of a drowning companion, if you merely offer yourself as his substitute, and drown yourself several yards off, you will not save him. It is not your drowning, but your good swimming, that preserves his life, and, as often happens, both might be saved. In saying, then, that one man died for another, we do not mean that he took death on himself as a substitute



for the other, but that death was incidental to the course of action by which he sought to confer a benefit. This, as we have seen, was distinctly recognized by Anselm. Similarly we may say that Christ died for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God,<sup>1</sup> without importing the idea of proper vicarious suffering; for it is conceivable that he might have brought us to God without dying. As an historical fact his death was incident to his strife against sin, and had to be faced in the fulfilment of his mission; nevertheless, the object of his mission was not to die, but to bring men to God, albeit his death has powerfully conduced to that end. It appears, then, that suffering incurred in the act of benefiting another, and vicarious suffering, are two perfectly distinct things. They are apt to be confounded by defenders of the doctrine of Atonement, who thus, by the improper use of a word, rely upon a hollow argument. In suffering for others we can, in our small way, imitate Christ; as a vicarious sufferer he would stand entirely apart, and it would be sheer profanity to speak of imitating him.

Once more, the doctrine of Atonement lays stress on the value and efficacy of self-sacrifice. But here again a caution is required. Self-sacrifice, considered purely as an act of suffering, has no merit, and may be absolutely wrong. Its worth consists entirely in the object in the prosecution of which it is offered. The thieves and Christ shared the same fate, and bore the same physical pains, as the result of their various kinds of activity. Yet in the one case we say the punishment, though cruel, was deserved, and think no more about it; in the other we kneel with uncovered head, and look with adoration on that dying form. Why? Because in the latter case the agony was incurred in a death-grapple with sin, which was undertaken through the profoundest love of mankind and the deepest inspiration of the Spirit of God. The worth lies in the love; but the power of love is revealed in self-sacrifice. From this we may learn that the essential

<sup>1</sup> I Peter iii. 18.



idea of sacrifice is the offering of something precious, out of pure love to God, and in devotion to some worthy end. It is indeed used in vulgar speech of the relinquishment of anything we care for, no matter what may be the motive ; but this usage empties the word of all religious significance, and is a degradation of sacred language. To be a sacrifice in any true sense the thing which we renounce must be offered to God, and be an expression of our heart's allegiance. If we look upon it as a bargain by which we buy some of God's favour for ourselves, it becomes a piece of profane selfishness. We cannot bestow presents or bribes upon him who is Lord of the universe ; nor can he receive them. Nevertheless he may accept an offering which, though useless to him, proceeds from our deep desire to be in harmony with him, and to subdue, through the power of a holy affection, whatever estranges us from him. Thus a sacrifice deliberately offered, as in the ancient Jewish system, might be the mark and pledge of reconciliation, and bring an answer of peace to the troubled conscience. But sacrifices, in the more figurative sense, are not offered as simple expressions of love, but rather are involved in the pursuit of some end. Love to God is the inspiring motive of the pursuit, and therefore the personal loss which is incurred bears witness to the power of the love ; nevertheless the object in view is not to incur loss, but to accomplish the will of God, which, in the case supposed, cannot be accomplished without loss. We may therefore reduce the law of sacrifice to the simple formula which found utterance in Gethsemane, ' Not my will, but thine be done.' It is this that has abolished the old sacrificial system, by disclosing the spiritual idea which lay at the heart of sacrifice, and which alone could impart to it a religious value.

Lastly, Christ is in a very real sense representative of mankind. We estimate a race differently according as we observe its meanest or its noblest specimens. If we are ever tempted by the violence and stupidity of the world to take a cynical and contemptuous view of it, we think of Plato, of Sophocles,



of Shakespeare, of Newton, of Dante and Milton, and learn to respect once more the lustre that shines upon its summits, and reveals the ideal possibilities of our nature. And so in our spiritual relations, Christ makes us ashamed to dwell amid the foulness of an imperfect race, and opens our eyes to the infinite possibilities of Divine communion. Not that he was without the limitations that belong to human nature. It is not as an artist, or a philosopher, or a critic, or a man of science, but as a Son of God that he comes before us, representing our nature as it moves under the guidance of the Divine Spirit. This, however, gives a universal aspect to his relations, and makes him equally at home in the cottage and the palace. Our gifts are infinitely diversified, and lend to life its various charm ; but all alike need goodness, and stand in moral relations to God and to one another. The moral image of humanity in our minds is elevated and purified by the contemplation of Christ, and, let me add, of the saintly men and women of every age and country, though most by him who, through our inherited faith, dwells deepest in our religious affections and may we not say, not dogmatically, but in the humility of our imperfect thought, that God, though his judgment is according to truth towards each individual, yet surveys mankind as a whole through his own eternal ideal of a Divine Humanity, which has found for us its fullest expression in Christ ?

Such, then, are the truths which, as it appears to me, are misinterpreted in the doctrine of the Atonement. The fundamental error lies in the doctrine of reconciliation, which, as we have seen, is directly opposed to the teaching of the New Testament. From this, as a starting-point, has arisen the hideous conception of a Deity so enraged as to doom his defenceless children indiscriminately to eternal torments, and then, having the fires of his wrath somewhat damped by a bloody sacrifice, consenting to save a few of them from this direful fate, a few chosen quite at random without any regard to their character, so that often the murderer is wrapt



in saving blood, while the pious and upright man who cannot believe in these horrors is hurled into hell. All this passes away as a malignant dream as soon as we accept the doctrine of the New Testament, that Christ came, not to reconcile an irate Deity to man unchanged and foul, but to reconcile man to God, to seek and save the lost, to call sinners to repentance, to bring us to God, and bless us in turning away every one from his iniquities. Am I reminded that according to one writer, 'He that obeys not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him,'<sup>1</sup> and that therefore there is a Divine wrath which has to be appeased? Truly so; but it is only for a moment that the apparent harshness of this verse can mislead us; for the whole doctrine of the chapter is precisely that which I have endeavoured to exhibit. Our wider knowledge may no doubt have somewhat altered our point of view; but we must endeavour to look upon things with the author's eyes, and so reach the essence of his thought. To him it seemed that the world was perishing in sin; but God so loved the world that he sent his Son, not on a mission of judgment, but of salvation. The wrath against sin, then, is not inconsistent with love; nay, it is a part of love, for love desires above all things harmony with itself. But though judgment was not the object of Christ's mission, it was a necessary accompaniment of it, as it is of every new spiritual force introduced into the world. Following or disregarding such moral standard as they possess, some men do the truth, and others practise evil; and when the call to higher righteousness sounds over the nations, it makes a crisis in human affairs, and separates these two classes of men, drawing the enthusiastic love of one, exciting the rancorous hatred of the other. So it was when the Word of God made flesh came as a light of spiritual truth, the sharer and revealer of the eternal life of Divine love. By some he was despised and rejected, and their guilt, already fit for condemnation and punishment, was deepened and hardened by that blindness

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 36.



of heart which refused to see or to own the beauty of holiness ; but others rose entranced, to behold the open vision, and to see angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. The latter were born from above, and entered the Divine fellowship of the children of God, God dwelling in them, and they in God. On the former, with their unrepented sin and their hatred of the light, the wrath still rested, simply because God cannot be reconciled to sin, but remains immutable in righteousness ; as *we* might say, those who persist in sin can look for nothing but judgment, and cannot know the peace of a reconciled heart.

In what has been said we have already indicated the answer to our question, why should Christ have suffered ? Because it is only on the field of suffering that sin can be vanquished, and the full power and depth of righteousness and love can be revealed. Socrates showed the worth of duty when he drank the hemlock, and lifted it in the eyes of men far above the fleeting pleasures of our earthly life ; and the influence of that deed has not yet wholly perished from the world. Christ on the cross showed that the love which would save man from sin was mightier than agony and scorn ; and the tragic pathos of the scene on Calvary has touched the heart as nothing else has ever done. The complete self-sacrifice of love breaks every doubt, and subdues all but the most hardened. But we must observe, the suffering revealed the *strength* of Christ's love, not the love itself. That was disclosed through his teaching and his life, and it seemed for a moment as if its power would be withdrawn when he in whom it lived passed from mortal sight. But it was not so. The complete self-renunciation of an agonizing death proved its force and sincerity as nothing else could have done ; and wherever the story was told it made the beautiful life a thousandfold more impressive, and drew men to him by the cords of pity, and admiration, and gratitude, and love. Suffering, then, is not always a penalty for sin, but is often the privilege of love. It is the last appeal which love can make to the



hard and unreconciled mind ; and the gift of his life is the greatest offering which a man can make to his friends.

One thought remains. The love which bore the cross was not merely the kindness and affection of a man ; for love is not the accident of flesh and blood, but belongs to the eternal realm. The regard which all men feel for kindred and friends may be said, in distinction, to belong to the natural order ; but the love which is a pervasive character of the soul, and, without waiting for sympathetic objects, flows perennially from the deep springs of its own independent life, is of heavenly origin. ' Love is from God, and every one that loveth has been born from God.'<sup>1</sup> It was, then, the Spirit of God himself, living and working in him, that spoke to the world in Christ ; it was Divine love that sustained him on the cross, a Divine pity and pardon for sin that bore the scorn and shame. And may we not add Paul's thought, that the love of God was shown in that he ' spared not his own Son ' ?<sup>2</sup> We must speak in figures. A father's heart is pierced when he sends forth his son to suffer and die for some great cause. And so we may say with all reverence, and knowing the inadequacy of our speech, that the heart of the infinite Father is touched when, through love to sinful man, he puts his Spirit upon his Beloved, and sends him forth to pain and death, that he may establish a Divine kingdom in the world. This is true, in its measure, of all saints ; and if the reconciling power of the world, the light of heavenly love, reaches its focus on the cross, it is diffused in many-coloured rays through a multitude of souls. When once we have truly apprehended the love of Christ, we perceive a glory of Divine love throughout the world, and know that love is the principle of eternal life, and whosoever loves dwells in God, and God in him. This, then, is the reconciliation, when we recognize the forgiving love of God, and, in spite of all our imperfections, rest in it with submissive wills, and humble gratitude and trust.

We must now leave this long examination, and touch

<sup>1</sup> I John iv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 32.



upon another topic which is less open to discussion. The second function attributed to Christ's priestly office is intercession. On this subject we must be content with a very few words; for what passes in the world of departed spirits is closely veiled from our eyes, and, though we may allow some scope to a trustful imagination, we are not in a position to lay down precise doctrines. We may, however, feel pretty confident that Christ does not intercede for men as though he were more merciful or less just than God. He whose meat it was on earth to do his Father's will cannot oppose that will in heaven. Nor can he exhibit his wounds as though God were in danger of forgetting them, or were likely to have his better judgment overruled by this appeal to a mere physical pity. Such ideas represent a mythological anthropomorphism, which can belong only to the Ptolemaic astronomy and an unspiritual form of Christianity. But we may fairly think that Christ is still praying for the race which he loved. If intercessory prayer, as an expression of the heart's love, is legitimate here, there is no reason why it should be silent there. This, however, is not the special office of a priest. All may offer the spiritual sacrifice of prayer; and if there is at present no immediate connexion between our spirits and those that have entered the immortal state, we may at least trust that there is a communion of love and prayer, and that we are united to one another in him who holds our lives in his keeping. So if anyone finds comfort in believing that he who died upon the cross still cherishes the world in his love, and that one so much holier than himself prays for all sinful men, I know not why this comfort should be denied him. Only these things are not so much articles of faith as a moral trust in the immortality of love.

### 3. Regal Office

When we pass to the regal work of Christ, we are still within the region of figurative language. The Messiah was indeed expected to be a king in the literal sense, and no doubt



some of the disciples of Jesus looked forward to a time when he would return, and occupy the throne of David, and rule over the house of Jacob for ever.<sup>1</sup> But though this expectation is put by his biographer into the mouth of an angel, Jesus himself gave no countenance to such a limited and earthly view. On the one occasion when we are told that he distinctly accepted the title of king, he had previously stated that his kingdom was not of this world, and he proceeded further to explain that he was king in the empire of truth.<sup>2</sup> In the parabolic description of the judgment of the world 'the Son of Man' is represented as a king;<sup>3</sup> but Jesus does not in this passage expressly identify the Son of Man with himself, and it is evident that the whole description relates to principles of judgment, and not to literal facts. On another occasion, we are told, he said to his Apostles, 'I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.'<sup>4</sup> Here again, though the words might be literally understood, it seems most probable that they were intended to convey a spiritual idea under an earthly symbol. Jesus repeatedly proclaims a kingdom of God, not a kingdom of his own; and though I believe he thought of himself, in his own spiritual sense, as the Messiah, he repeatedly, as in the Lord's Prayer, keeps himself out of sight, and interposes nothing between the soul and God. Nothing could have been more repugnant to his whole tone of thought than the assumption of the power and trappings of royalty; for he came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister. The figure was more readily used by his disciples; but, if any earthly notions mingled in their thought, it is clear that the spiritual still preponderated, and the kingdom of Christ formed in their minds a marked contrast to the heathen empires by which the world was crushed. Paul declares that Christ must reign till he has put all enemies under his

<sup>1</sup> See Luke i. 32 sq.

<sup>2</sup> John xviii. 36 sq.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxv. 31, 34, 40.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xxii. 29 sq.



feet, the enemies being evidently the powers of sin and death.<sup>1</sup> This reign is extended in the Apocalypse from himself to his followers,<sup>2</sup> so that, as in Daniel, the kingdom belongs to the saints of the Most High. In other passages Christ's kingdom is simply referred to,<sup>3</sup> and twice it is connected with the kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup>

Another mode of expression, closely connected with that of regal dignity, is derived from the 110th Psalm, 'Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool'; for this is quoted more than once in connexion with Christ.<sup>5</sup> Jesus himself, when questioned by the high-priest, applies this figure to the Son of Man, evidently with an allusion to the passage in Daniel: 'Ye shall see the Son of Man seated on the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.'<sup>6</sup> This metaphor of sitting or standing or simply being on the right hand of God is used with sufficient frequency to show that it had become a common Christian idea.<sup>7</sup> It must have originated at a time when Christ had not yet been identified with God, and was probably intended to express, not so much the regal power, as the heavenly exaltation of Christ, and the identity of his rule with that of God.<sup>8</sup> But it lent itself easily to speculations as to the

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. xv. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. v. 10, xx. 4, 6, xxii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Col. i. 13, 'He has removed us into the kingdom of the Son of his love'; II Tim. iv. 1, 18, 'his heavenly kingdom'; II Pet. i. 11, 'the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'; and see Rev. i. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. v. 5, the wicked have 'no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God'; Rev. xi. 15, 'the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.'

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xxii. 44, with parallels in Mark xii. 36, Luke xx. 42 sq.; also Acts ii. 34 sq., Heb. i. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. xxvi. 64, with the parallels in Mark xiv. 62, Luke xxii. 69.

<sup>7</sup> Mark xvi. 19; Acts vii. 55, 56; Rom. viii. 34; Eph. i. 20; Col. iii. 1; Heb. i. 3, viii. 1, x. 12, xii. 2; I Pet. iii. 22.

<sup>8</sup> In Rev. iii. 21, it is promised that 'he who conquers' shall share the throne of Christ; so that this elevation is not supposed to be beyond the reach of man. Fitzstephen, describing the murder of à Becket, says that he was 'on his way to God's right hand,' *ad dextram Dei iturus*: Abbott, *St. Thomas of Canterbury*, I, p. 151.

cosmic power of Christ ; for, as seated at the right hand of God, he might seem to be God's vicegerent in the government of the universe. We know not what power or what administration may be entrusted to the immortal soul, and on such subjects it is more reverent to be silent. Yet some thoughts of a more spiritual kind, and more within the range of our experience, may be permitted. Christ's kingdom is the rule which, through his teaching and his Spirit, he exercises over the hearts of men. His subjects are not those who shout Lord, Lord, and do not the things which he says, but those who, drawing from him the same Spirit of life, do the will of his Father in heaven. And if we would give him a cosmic significance, we may say that, as being filled with the fulness of the Divine Spirit, he enshrines the idea which lies at the heart of the universe, and is the final cause of its creation. To be in him is to be in God, for his Spirit is the Spirit of God ; and whosoever abides in him abides in love, and love is the eternal life of the world.



## CHAPTER V

### THE CHURCH: ITS ORIGIN AND IDEA

WE have now surveyed the primary agency through which, in Christianity, man is reconciled to God. It is conceivable that the effect of this agency, though spreading in ever-widening circles, might gradually have died down and become dissipated and indistinguishable amid the multitudinous currents of human life. And it is not improbable that this would have been the case had there not been a second agency, appointed to maintain the original impulse, and hand it down unimpaired from generation to generation. Even if the New Testament Scriptures had been written, nevertheless, if they had been sent forth as separate treatises in the general mass of literature, to take their chance amid a crowd of competitors for individual acceptance, it is very doubtful whether they would ever have attained to the universality of influence which they now enjoy. That they have been selected and combined, and transmitted as a sacred treasure, to mould the thoughts and purify the dispositions of men, is due to the activity of an organized society, whose business it was to perpetuate the influence of Christ in the world. We are thus led to the contemplation of the Church, and of the various problems which are associated with it.

The word 'Church' in English is ambiguous. It is usually derived from *κυριακόν* which was used in ancient times of the building where people assembled for public

worship.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, also used of the society or societies of Christians, meeting together or organized as such ; and it is only in this sense that it can engage our interest at present. The term which represents it in the New Testament is ἐκκλησία, a word which is most familiar to the classical student as denoting the general assembly of Athenian citizens. We find it used in a general sense in Acts xix. 32 and 40, where it refers to the tumultuous crowd that met in the theatre at Ephesus to maintain the rights of Artemis, and in verse 39 where it is applied to the lawful or regular meeting of citizens. It is, however, constantly employed in a technical sense, to denote a Christian society. This application of the term may be derived from its frequent appearance in the LXX, to represent the Hebrew קהל, the general assembly of the people of Israel. It is found in this sense in the New Testament, in Stephen's speech,<sup>2</sup> and in a quotation in Hebrews ii. 12. Generally it refers to a local society, such as the Church at Corinth, and accordingly it is very frequently found in the plural.<sup>3</sup> It was natural, however, to regard these several societies, which were distinguished by similar characteristics, and united by feelings of spiritual brotherhood, as forming one composite whole. This idea of a single Church is most fully expressed in Ephesians, which is one of the later Epistles. It is, however, recognizable in I Corinthians xii. 28 ; and in Philippians we meet with it in iii. 6, though in iv. 15 it has its more restricted application. The same varying sense is found also in Colossians i. 18, 24, compared with iv. 15, 16.

From the apostolic age down to the present time the Church has had a continuous existence. Even in very

<sup>1</sup> For an example see Athanasius, *Apologia ad Constantinum*, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Acts vii. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xv. 41, xvi. 5 ; Rom. xvi. 4, 16 ; I Cor. vii. 17, xi. 16, xiv. 33, 34, xvi. 1, 19 ; II Cor. viii. 1, 18, 19, 23, 24, xi. 8, 28, xii. 13 ; Gal. i. 2, 22 ; I Thess. ii. 14 ; II Thess. i. 4 ; and several passages in Rev. i.-iii., and xxii. 16.



early times, however, the Christian society was rent by factions ; and in the more recent centuries it has been split into an enormous number of sects, which all claim to be Christian because they profess the same ultimate allegiance, and justify their separate existence by their several pretensions to be better representatives of the original gospel than their neighbours. This fact at once betrays the existence of different conceptions of the origin, nature, and functions of the Church. These, having been brought into the arena of controversy, have become the subjects of dogmatic definition ; and they will be most conveniently submitted to our consideration through a statement and criticism of the principal types of doctrine. We have been already obliged, in treating of the sources of doctrine, to estimate the claims of the Church as an organ of dogmatic truth ; and we must now proceed to investigate other fundamental questions involved in the general theory of the Church.

The doctrine of the Church was not systematically defined by the Council of Trent ; but it is set forth very fully in the Catechism, in the explanation of the article ‘Credo sanctam ecclesiam catholicam.’<sup>1</sup> The original reads *εἰς μίαν ἁγίαν καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν*. The omission of ‘in’ is specially emphasized by the Catechism, so as to give the meaning, ‘I believe that there is one holy and catholic Church,’ our faith being placed in the three persons of the Trinity, and not in anything created.<sup>2</sup> The importance of the doctrine is insisted on as a protection against heresy ; for a heretic is not merely one who has erred in the faith, but one who, neglecting the authority of the Church, obstinately maintains impious opinions. ‘Ecclesia,’ in its theological sense, is employed ‘to signify the Christian commonwealth, and congregations of the faithful only ; those namely, who have been called to the light of truth and the knowledge of God through faith, in order that having rejected the darkness of ignorance and error they may worship

<sup>1</sup> Pars I, Art. ix. Cap. x.

<sup>2</sup> § xxiii.



the true and living God with piety and holiness, and serve him with their whole heart,' or, as Augustine says, it is 'a faithful people dispersed through the whole world.'<sup>1</sup> The word itself, which signifies *evocatio*, a calling forth, making apparent as it does the splendour of Divine grace, distinguishes the Church from other commonwealths; for they depend upon human wisdom and prudence, but this has been constituted by the wisdom and counsel of God: for he has called us by the inward breathing of the Holy Spirit, who opens the hearts of men, but outwardly by the work and ministry of pastors and preachers. The Church consists of two parts, triumphant and militant. The former is the assembly of blessed spirits, and of those who have triumphed over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and safely enjoy eternal beatitude. The militant Church is the assembly of all the faithful who still live on earth; and it is called militant, because it has perpetual war with the world, the flesh, and Satan. In the latter portion of the Church there are two sorts of men, good and bad. The bad partake of the same sacraments, and profess the same faith as the good, but are dissimilar in life and morals. The good are united to one another not only by the profession of faith and the communion of the sacraments, but also by the spirit of grace and the bond of love. Men may conjecture who these are, but cannot have certain knowledge. It is owing to this inevitable ignorance that the Church includes both good and bad. That it does so the Gospel teaches in many parables, as when it compares the kingdom of heaven, that is the militant Church, to a net cast into the sea, or to a field in which tares have been sown in addition to the good grain. This was shown also at a much earlier time in the ark of Noah, in which there were unclean animals as well as clean. Hence it is that only three kinds of men are excluded from the Church: first, infidels; secondly, heretics and schismatics; and finally, the excommunicated. All others,

<sup>1</sup> 'Populus fidelis per universum orbem dispersus.' § iii.



however wicked, continue in the Church ; and the faithful may be confident that if the life of priests should happen to be flagitious, nevertheless they are in the Church, and there is not on that account any deduction from their power. Other parts of the universal Church are local Churches, as at Corinth or in Galatia ; and sometimes the word Church signifies its presidents and pastors.

We must now attend to the properties, or, as they are frequently called, the 'notes' of the Church. The first is unity. Such a widely diffused multitude is called one because it declares that there is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism ; for its ruler and governor is one, the invisible Christ, whom the eternal Father gave to be head over the whole Church, which is his body. But for constituting and preserving the unity of the Church a visible head was necessary, and this visible head is the occupant of the Roman See, the legitimate successor of Peter, the prince of the Apostles. The second property of the Church is holiness. It is called holy, first, because it is consecrated to God, and this remains true though it may include many sinners. Secondly, it is to be spoken of as holy, because it is joined as a body to its holy head, Christ the Lord, the fountain of all holiness, from whom are diffused the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the riches of Divine goodness. Thirdly, the Church alone has the legitimate worship (*cultum*) of sacrifice and the salutary use of the sacraments, through which, as effectual instruments of divine grace, God produces true holiness ; so that those who are truly holy cannot be outside of this Church. The third property is catholicity or universality, because the splendour of one faith is diffused from the rising to the setting of the sun. For, unlike human commonwealths or sects of heretics, the Church is not limited by the boundaries of one kingdom, or of one class of men, but embraces in the bosom of its love all men, barbarians, Scythians, bond and free. Moreover, all the faithful, who have been from the time of Adam to the present day, or who are yet to be, as long as the world



shall exist, professing the true faith, belong to the same Church. It is also called universal because all who desire to obtain eternal salvation ought to hold and embrace it, as those who entered the ark lest they should perish in the flood. Lastly, the Church is apostolic, because its doctrine is the primitive truth, handed down from the Apostles, and disseminated through the whole world. For the Holy Spirit, who presides over the Church, governs it only through an apostolic ministry ; and as this Church, being governed by the Holy Spirit, cannot err in handing down the discipline of faith and morals, so all others which arrogate the name of church are, as being led by the spirit of the devil, necessarily involved in the most pernicious errors of doctrine and morals.

It is added that this article of the creed, no less than the others, surpasses our intelligence, so that we justly confess that we do not know the origin, gifts, and dignity of the Church by human reason, but behold them with the eyes of faith. For not men were the authors of this Church, but the immortal God himself, who built it on the firmest rock. Nor is the power which it has received human, but bestowed by Divine gift ; and we understand by faith alone that in the Church are the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and to it has been delivered the power of remitting sins, of excommunicating, and of consecrating the true body of Christ.

It can hardly be denied that at least in some of its features the foregoing is a noble and attractive description of the Church ; and if dissentients from it were only a few scattered and eccentric individuals, we might be tempted to receive it as a true representation of the Christian ideal. But when we survey the actual condition of Christendom, we see that a large part (I believe the larger part), consisting mainly of the Greek Church and the various Protestant bodies, stands outside the Roman communion ; and when we apply the practical test of judging men by their fruits, we do not observe in the members of that communion a moral and



spiritual superiority corresponding to the prodigious apparatus of miracle on which it is professedly based. If it be true that no other body pretends to be the one and only Church of Christ, this fact does not necessarily favour the Roman claim; for such a claim may be only a mark of narrowness and presumption, from which other bodies have been happily liberated by a larger and juster theory. At all events the exclusion or secession of Protestants from the Roman communion rendered necessary, in order to defend their own position, a radical change of definition, which should, by implication, explain and justify the existence of several churches with their own separate governments. The general character of the Protestant view is clearly described in the Augsburg Confession<sup>1</sup>:—‘There is to be and remain for ever one holy Christian Church, which is the assembly of all believers, in which the Gospel is purely preached, and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. For this is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian Church . . . And it is not necessary to the true unity of the Christian Church that uniform ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere observed . . . Although the Christian Church is properly nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints, nevertheless, since in this life there are many false Christians and hypocrites, and open sinners remain among the pious, the sacraments are still valid, although the priests through whom they are administered are not pious.’ In the Apology for the Confession<sup>2</sup> a distinction, which is implied in the above definition, is clearly enunciated. The Church, it is said, is not merely a communion in external things, but is in principle a communion of faith and of the Holy Spirit in men’s hearts. Nevertheless it has also outward marks, the Word of God and the Sacraments, by which it is known. This Church alone is called

<sup>1</sup> Articles vii. and viii. I follow the German. The Latin is differently expressed, but similar in meaning.

<sup>2</sup> Art. iv.

the body of Christ, because Christ is its head, and sanctifies and strengthens it through his spirit. Those in whom Christ effects nothing through his Spirit are not members of Christ. The Church being holy, the godless and wicked cannot be the holy Church. The title 'catholic' shows that the Church is not, like political institutions, limited to this or that land, but that the men who compose it are scattered here and there throughout the world, having one gospel, one Christ, one baptism and sacrament, and the rule of one Holy Spirit, though they have dissimilar ceremonies. Arguments are adduced to show that, properly speaking, the Church of Christ consists only of those who partake of the Holy Spirit and faith. The true Church is the kingdom of Christ; and all the godless, though they may be living in connexion with the Church, belong to the kingdom of the devil. This is taught in the parable of the tares, where the field is the world, not the Church, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom, while the tares are the kingdom of the devil. Thus the Church is concealed under the great mass of the godless; but still it is no imaginary Church, for there are really children of God here and there in all the world, in all kingdoms, islands, lands, and cities, from the rising to the setting of the sun.

The distinction which is thus clearly described was afterwards marked by the terms the 'visible' and the 'invisible' Church. One of these terms is employed in the articles of the Church of England; but its correlative is not used, and the subject is not worked out. 'The visible Church of Christ,' it is said, 'is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.'<sup>1</sup> 'Faithful' here apparently means no more than those who profess the faith; for in a subsequent article<sup>2</sup> it is said that 'in the visible Church the evil be

<sup>1</sup> Article xix.

<sup>2</sup> xxvi.



ever mingled with the good.' It seems also to be implied that the visible Church consists of a number of separate churches, which may or may not be in communion with one another; for the article adds that 'As the Church of *Jerusalem*, *Alexandria*, and *Antioch*, have erred, so also the Church of *Rome* hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.' The validity of the word and the sacraments remains, 'although they be ministered by evil men'; but such men, if found guilty, ought to be deposed.<sup>1</sup> It is declared that 'The Bishop of *Rome* hath no jurisdiction in this Realm of *England*.'<sup>2</sup> This declaration is connected with the assertion of the royal supremacy over all estates of the realm, whether they be ecclesiastical or civil; and thus the Church of England quite definitely entered on the path of schism, making the visible unity of the Church impossible, not only in fact, but in principle. Coleridge would escape from this conclusion by the assumption that the Papacy is Antichrist. He says, 'If the Papacy, and the Romish hierarchy as far as it is Papal, be not Antichrist, the guilt of schism in its most aggravated form lies on the authors of the reformation.'<sup>3</sup> This is an unpleasant alternative for the High Church party. By 'Antichrist' Coleridge means 'a usurped power in the Church itself, which, in the name of Christ, and pretending his authority, systematically subverts or counteracts the peculiar aims and purposes of Christ's mission; and which, vesting in a mortal his incommunicable headship, destroys and exchanges for the contrary the essential contra-distinguishing marks or characters of his kingdom on earth.'<sup>4</sup>

The Westminster Confession recognizes explicitly the distinction of the invisible and the visible Churches, but assigns rather a different meaning from that which is given to it

<sup>1</sup> Article xxvi.

<sup>2</sup> xxxvii.

<sup>3</sup> *On the Constitution of the Church and State according to the idea of each: on the third possible Church, or the Church of Antichrist*, p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> p. 151.

(though without the name) in the Lutheran standards. 'The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.' 'This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ.' 'There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God.'<sup>1</sup>

It is unnecessary to follow the variations of the Protestant definitions in greater detail; for the fundamental distinction between the Roman and the Protestant views is now sufficiently apparent. In the Catholic doctrine the Church is a single organism, under one supreme and invisible head, the Lord Jesus Christ, who exercises his monarchical authority through the Pope as his visible representative. In opposition to this attractive ideal of a single divine society, holding men together in fraternal and spiritual bonds, regardless of differences of race and nation, the Protestants were obliged, in order to justify their own existence, to dissolve the Church

<sup>1</sup> Chap. XXV.



into a number of churches, possessing no organic unity, and therefore incapable of having a visible head. These various national or confessional societies might have communion with one another, and so maintain a kind of outward unity. The Church of England, as we have seen, expressly recognizes some other societies as churches in spite of their errors, and at the time of the Reformation did not reject the communion of Rome ;<sup>1</sup> but by disowning the papal jurisdiction it joined with other Protestants in breaking the organic unity of Western Christendom, and became to all intents and purposes a schismatic church. The doctrine of the invisible church, an unknown and unorganized crowd of genuine Christians, scattered through all the separated churches, maintained a theoretical and imaginative unity amid the actual recriminations and persecutions of discordant sects. But a rent and tattered Christendom is not a pleasing spectacle, nor is it easy to recognize in it a genuine expression of the Christian ideal. Most thoughtful men feel that there is something wrong somewhere. Either the unity of a divine institution has been violated by the passion and self-will of schismatics and heretics, or the dominant Church, followed in this by smaller societies, has imposed tests of membership which Christ did not impose and would not have recognized, and so has forced into separation men who desired only to be loyal to Christ and to the spiritual faith which he taught. To judge of this alternative we must glance at Christ's teaching as recorded in the Gospels ; and we shall perhaps find there a far larger view than those prevalent in Christendom, and one more in accordance with the spiritual facts of the world.

Christ's teaching habitually refers to something wider and more spiritual than any visible Church, and we must briefly notice his conception of the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God. This phrase is frequently used in Rabbinical

<sup>1</sup> See Gladstone, *The State in its Relations with the Church*, 2nd edition, 1839, p. 196.



writings, where it denotes, as Lightfoot says,<sup>1</sup> 'the inward love and fear of God,' and it is only by an extension of meaning that it can signify the undefined realm of those who are governed by those great principles.<sup>2</sup> These two meanings are, however, so closely related that the one easily passes into the other; but it is important to remember that the former is the primary sense, and that a kingdom of God as a visible society upon earth must consist of men in whom the sovereignty of God is inwardly exercised and acknowledged.

This idea, though capable of such wide extension, might be associated with narrow and unspiritual views; for men, not always through arrogance, seem to have a difficulty in believing that the spiritual gifts, of which they are vividly conscious in themselves, are equally open to their neighbours, and that the same God over all 'is rich unto all that call upon him.'<sup>3</sup> Now, in spite of the eschatological passages, which have their parallels in Jewish apocalypse, the distinctive teaching of Jesus set aside the limited expectations and apocalyptic fancies of his time, and spoke of the great governing principles which determine the religious progress of mankind. He denied that the kingdom of God was to come with sudden and miraculous portents, and maintained that it was already present and operative in the world.<sup>4</sup> Yet it was not a kingdom of this world, with its geographical limits and political organization, but was an indeterminate community scattered through all lands, and consisting of the poor in spirit, the persecuted, and those who had the simple and confiding faith of childhood. Its subjects were

<sup>1</sup> *Heb. et Talm. Exerc.*, Matt. iii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> See my *Jewish Messiah*, pp. 319 sqq., and *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 129 sq.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. x. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xvii. 20 sq; Matt. xii. 28, with Luke xi. 20; Matt. vi. 33, with Luke xii. 31; Matt. v. 3, 10; Matt. xviii. 1 sqq., (cf. Mark ix. 33 sqq. and Luke ix. 46 sqq., which omit 'the kingdom of heaven'); Mark x. 13 sqq. with Matt. xix. 13 sqq. and Luke xviii. 15 sqq; Mark x. 23 sqq. with Matt. xix. 23 sq. and Luke xviii. 24 sq.; Matt. xxiii. 13, with Luke xi. 52; Matt. xi. 12, with Luke xvi. 16; Matt. xxi. 43; Mark xii. 28 sqq.



those who did the will of the Father in heaven, and with modest service ministered to the wants of his children,<sup>1</sup> and those alone could see or enter it who were born from above.<sup>2</sup> Like all spiritual ideals which are slowly realizing themselves in the world, it is future as well as present, and we still must watch for fresh glories to rise upon the world, and pray that the kingdom may come with ever-growing power to the hearts of men.<sup>3</sup>

While Christ thus spoke continually of the kingdom of God, the word 'church' is almost wholly absent from his teaching. In three of the Gospels it is nowhere found—a sufficient proof that, to say the least, it must have occupied a very subordinate place in his thought. It is only in Matthew that the term appears, and even there there is only one passage that has any bearing on our subject. In xviii. 17 where Christ directs his disciples to report to the Church the case of an obstinate offender, the ἐκκλησία probably refers simply to a body of ten persons, called **תַּעֲרָא**, or congregation, ten being 'the number required by Rabbinical law for various more solemn religious acts,' so that we have this climax: '(1) first go to him *privately*; then (2) with one or two [or three] witnesses, i.e., *semi-publicly*; and then (3) with a full congregation of ten men, i.e., *publicly*.'<sup>4</sup> The reference in the other passage, however, is beyond question. After Peter's confession Jesus says to him, 'Thou art Peter (Πέτρος), and on this rock (πέτρα) I will build my Church.'<sup>5</sup> This is the one text on which Catholic theologians rely as the divine authentication of the Papal claims and it is truly

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 21 sqq.; cf. Luke vi. 46, xiii. 25 sqq.; see also Matt. xii. 50, with Mark iii. 35 and Luke viii. 21; Luke xi. 27 sq.; Matt. xxv. 31 sqq.; Matt. xiii. 24 sqq., 37 sqq.; Luke x. 30 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> John iii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> For the detailed consideration of the several passages referred to see my *Hibbert Lectures*, IV, on 'The Kingdom of God.'

<sup>4</sup> W. H. Lowe, *The Fragment of Talmud Babli*, 1879, p. 65, note Cc.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xvi. 18.

astonishing that men can be content with such slender evidence to sustain the weight of a stupendous dogma. Let us observe the facts.

In the first place, the passage contains no reference whatever to Peter's successors, much less to the Bishop of Rome.

Secondly, the meaning of building the Church upon Peter is very obscure. Some interpreters, indeed, point out the distinction between *πέτρος* and *πέτρα*, and refer the latter to Peter's confession as the foundation of the Christian Church; but it is probable that both words were כִּיפָא in Aramaic, so that the 'rock' naturally refers to Peter. Granting this, can the figurative expression denote more than that Christ relied on the firmness and solidity of Peter to sustain the fabric of his Church, and not allow his cause to perish? The sequel did not demonstrate Peter's rock-like character; for he denied his Master in a moment of panic, and, according to Paul, he virtually denied him again by his hypocritical conduct at Antioch. Metaphorical language readily admits of different applications, and for this reason affords a very insecure basis for dogma. Paul represents Jesus Christ himself, and him only, as the foundation;<sup>1</sup> and elsewhere the members of the Church are spoken of as 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone.'<sup>2</sup> In Jerusalem Peter, by his boldness and energy, started the Church, and reared its earliest fabric, and in this sense was the rock on which it rested; but even in Jerusalem the primacy was subsequently accorded to James the brother of the Lord. In no other place could Peter have a higher claim, and in fact, unless the present passage be an exception, his primacy receives no recognition in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> We must add that any primacy among Christ's disciples, except the primacy of self-denial and loving service is expressly prohibited. 'Who-

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. iii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. ii. 20.

<sup>3</sup> For Origen's view, extending the promise to all the faithful, see before, p. 102, note 2.



soever shall humble himself as this little child shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven';<sup>1</sup> 'whosoever shall wish to become great among you, shall be your servant, and whosoever shall wish to be first among you, shall be the slave of all';<sup>2</sup> 'be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, the Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.'<sup>3</sup> These are explicit sayings, and agreeable to the whole tenor of Christ's teaching; but good Churchmen think that Ignatius and Cyprian knew better.

Thirdly, those who feel compelled to apply critical methods to the evangelical narratives cannot help entertaining grave doubts whether the words in question were ever uttered by Christ at all. If they really contain the fundamental dogma of Christianity, we should expect to find them, if not referred to in the Epistles, at least recorded in all four Gospels. But what militates most strongly against their authenticity is the fact that Mark<sup>4</sup> and Luke<sup>5</sup> contain narratives which, notwithstanding minor differences, are closely parallel to that in Matthew, and yet they both omit the address to Peter. The natural inference surely is that, if they all followed a common source, the source was without this addition; or, if Mark is the source, of which Matthew and Luke are literary variations, then also the earliest form of the record contained no allusion to the Church. In either case it would seem that our first evangelist is responsible for the insertion. He may have had some source, written or oral, which he thought he could depend upon; but we know nothing of its value, and have no reason to suppose that he scanned his authorities with a very critical eye. Another evidence of insertion is afforded by the incongruity between the solemn eulogium

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 4; and see Mark ix. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Mark x. 43 sq., with Matt. xx. 26 sq.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxiii. 8-11.

<sup>4</sup> Mark viii. 27 sqq.

<sup>5</sup> Luke ix. 18 sqq.

of Peter and the terrible rebuke which follows almost immediately. Luke kindly suppresses this portion of the story ; but that Mark should allow his readers to look upon Peter as a Satan, who had no sympathy with the aims of Christ, while he deliberately expunged the exalted commission on which the salvation of the world was to depend, and recorded only a rebuke for his acknowledgment of the Messiahship of Jesus, is surely most improbable. I am compelled therefore to believe that this famous passage is of late origin, and on the most favourable view depends on a tradition which it is impossible for us to trust.

Professor Bacon, however, defends the passage by appealing to a Rabbinical parallel. He quotes from Dr. Chase's article on the First Epistle of Peter in Dr. Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, where it is cited from an article by Dr. Schechter in the Jewish Quarterly Review.<sup>1</sup> The passage is as follows : 'Abraham also bears in Rabbinic literature the title of Rock . . . The Rabbinic passage forms an illustration of Num. xxiii. 9, "for from the top of the rocks I see him," and runs thus : There was a king who desired to build, and to lay foundations he dug constantly deeper, but found only a swamp. At last he dug and found a *petra* (this is the very word the Rabbi uses). He said, "on this spot I will build and lay the foundations." So the Holy One, blessed be he, desired to create the world, but meditating upon the generations of Enoch and the deluge, he said, "How shall I create the world whilst these wicked men will only provoke me ?" But as soon as God perceived that there would rise an Abraham, he said, "Behold, I have found the *petra* upon which to build and to lay foundations." Therefore he called Abraham Rock, as it is said, "look unto the rock whence ye are hewn. Look unto Abraham your father" (Is. li. 1, 2).'<sup>2</sup> Professor Bacon

<sup>1</sup> XII, 1900, pp. 428 sq.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to Yalkut, I, § 766, and adds 'See Dr. Taylor's *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers*, ed. 2, p. 160.



says,<sup>1</sup> 'This shows a pre-Christian conception of the commonwealth of God as God's building (1 Cor. 3 : 9 ; Heb. 3 : 3-6), and both protects and illuminates the *logion*.' Not every one will agree with Professor Bacon that the existence of a pre-Christian conception is proved by a Rabbinical citation in a work which appears not to be earlier than the eleventh century ; and even if that could be admitted, the parallel could prove no more than that the saying was of Jewish-Christian rather than of Gentile origin. More to the purpose is the appeal to the choosing of the twelve, and to the *logion* Matthew xix. 28, Luke xxii. 30, promising that the apostles should sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, 'protected,' as he says, by I Corinthians vi. 2, 'the saints shall judge the world.' These, he thinks, will be hard to account for if Jesus had no idea of instituting a new Israel. That Jesus not only contemplated, but actually carried on, a reforming movement in Israel no one, I suppose, will deny ; but the *logia* which are cited are eschatological, and have nothing to do with the founding of a Church. As Professor Bacon refers in the same note to the omission of the address to Peter in the Diatessaron, it may be as well to say that the alleged omission is very doubtful.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In an article on 'The Transfiguration Story,' in the *American Journal of Theology*, April, 1902, p. 238, note.

<sup>2</sup> Harnack, indeed, in an article on Tatian's Diatessaron and Marcion's Commentary, published in the *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* in 1881, conjectured that the words were not in the Harmony because they are not quoted by Ephraem, and he thought that the context in Ephraem's Commentary showed that they were not before him (p. 484). But he himself was quite aware of the fragmentary character of Ephraem's citations (p. 479), and that he generally selected and commented on only one or two clauses in his text, and passed over the rest (p. 474). Zahn's important work on Tatian appeared later in the same year, and he maintained that Harnack's view of the passage was arbitrary, and it was unintelligible how he could maintain it (p. 163, note 3). The passage is contained in the Arabic Version (see the translation by Rev. J. Hamlyn Hill, 1894, p. 136). It might of course be a later insertion ; but of this there is no evidence. Wernle adopts Harnack's view, but without giving



Whether or not we attribute this saying to Christ, it is at all events apparent that his primary aim was not to found a Church, but to extend the kingdom of God. It is indeed commonly assumed that the kingdom of God is the Christian Church, and that the vast multitude of men who are outside this ark of safety are subjects of a God-forsaken realm. But this narrow idea belongs to the theologians, and not to Christ. He recognizes his spiritual kindred in all who do the will of God. Iniquity alone excludes from the Divine kingdom ; goodness alone admits to it. This test confessedly does not apply to membership in the Church ; and though it may be true that it applies to the 'invisible Church' of Protestantism, this only represents the fact that the kingdom of God has a home in the Christian Church as well as in other parts of the world. The larger idea, though destined so soon to pass away, found expression even in the second century ; and a man so little distinguished by breadth of view as Justin Martyr declared that all who had lived or were still living with Reason (the Logos) were Christians.<sup>1</sup> An unwarrantable extension may thus be given to the word Christian ; but it shows that even then the true mark of the subjects of the kingdom of God was regarded as spiritual, not institutional. There seems to be a remnant of the same view in the declaration of the Catechismus Romanus that 'all the faithful who have been from the time of Adam to the present day, or who shall be as long as the world shall exist, professing the true faith, belong to the same Church' ;<sup>2</sup> for certainly the visible unity of the Church, under the

reasons (*Die synoptische Frage*, p. 135). His supposition that Tertullian omitted the words, 'The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it,' does not concern us. It rests simply on the fact that in the two places where Tertullian refers to this passage he quotes only the words that were important for his argument (*De Pud.* 21 ; *De Praescr. Haeret.* 22).

<sup>1</sup> Οἱ μετὰ λόγου βιώσαντες Χριστιανοί εἰσι, καὶ ἄθεοι ἐνομίσθησαν, οἷον ἐν Ἑλλήσι μὲν Σωκράτης καὶ Ἡράκλειτος καὶ οἱ ὅμοιοι αὐτοῖς. . . . οἱ δὲ μετὰ λόγου βιώσαντες καὶ βιοῦντες Χριστιανοὶ . . . ὑπάρχουσι. *Apol.* I, 46.

<sup>2</sup> Pars I, Art. IX, cap. x, § xvii.



supremacy of the Pope, has not existed from the time of Adam. In the early centuries after Christ, when to be a Christian was to be hated and persecuted, there may have been comparatively few members of the new faith who were not led by the Spirit of God, and in the midst of the corrupt Roman society Christianity might well appear to believers to be the one redeeming power ; but nevertheless the Church was an instrument for furthering the kingdom of God, and was not identical with it. Of Christ's teaching this is certainly true ; and we do not honour him by forcing on him an exclusiveness which he disowned.

Did, then, Christ not found and constitute a Church at all ? I think there is no evidence that he did ; for the gathering together of disciples, and the selection of twelve to share his closest intimacy and spread abroad his teaching, can hardly be described in these terms, though they no doubt prepared the way for the formation of a distinct and organized community. Even the words which he is said to have addressed to Peter speak only of a purpose which he did not live to accomplish, and there is no hint of any sort in the records of his life that he prescribed a definite organization for the ecclesiastical government of his disciples. Nevertheless, I believe that the Christian Church sprang inevitably and properly out of the movement which he began, and may in this sense be spoken of as having a Divine origin. Gladstone says that 'national organization is evidently of divine appointment, as growing out of the primary necessities and impulses of our nature, and tending to its highest developments.'<sup>1</sup> With at least equal justice it may be said that religious organization is of Divine appointment, though we may be obliged to add in each case that there is no particular mode of organization which is alone legitimate. The religious affections draw men together in fraternal union ; and under Christianity the communion of the Holy Spirit, binding the disciples together as one family of the children of God,

<sup>1</sup> *The State in its Relations with the Church*, p. 50.



was especially conspicuous. The first disciples felt themselves to be, not a loose assortment of unrelated atoms, but a holy brotherhood in Christ ; and therefore they were drawn each to each for common worship and mutual encouragement. And again the impulse of saving love was a dominant motive among the earliest believers. They were driven by the spirit of Christ to carry the light of truth and the renovating power of divine grace into the dark abodes of superstition and sin. Thus within a generation after the date of the crucifixion there were congregations of Christians scattered over the wide extent of the Roman empire, which were bound to one another by common sympathies and faith, and were already conscious that they formed a single Church, although their spiritual unity had not yet found formal and organized expression. It is therefore correct to speak of Christ as the founder of the Church, although he founded it, not by express command, but by the power of his spirit.

The view here presented seems to be in accordance with the earliest tradition. The commission to the Apostles is by all four evangelists placed after the resurrection. In Matthew the eleven disciples meet Jesus on an appointed mountain in Galilee ; and he then declares that all authority has been given to him in heaven and on earth, and desires them to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep everything that he has commanded ; and ' lo ! ' he adds, ' I am with you all the days until the completion of the age.'<sup>1</sup> According to the usual ending of Mark<sup>2</sup> Jesus appeared to the eleven while they were reclining at table, and directed them to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to all the creation. He added, ' He that has believed and been baptized shall be saved, and he that has not believed shall be condemned.' After he had spoken to them he was taken up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. In Luke,<sup>3</sup> having said that in

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 16-20.

<sup>2</sup> xvi. 14 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> xxiv. 47 sqq.



his name repentance shall be preached among all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem, he adds, 'Ye are witnesses of these things, and behold I send forth the promise of my Father upon you ; but remain in the city until ye be endued with power from on high.' In accordance with this representation Luke describes in the Acts the descent of the Spirit and the founding of the Church on the day of Pentecost. In John<sup>1</sup> Jesus appears to ten of the disciples, Thomas being absent, and says, 'As my Father has sent me I also send you'; and when he said this, he breathed on them, and said 'Receive the Holy Spirit ; whose soever sins ye remit, they have been remitted unto them ; whose soever ye retain, they have been retained.' We can hardly regard these statements as literal records of historical circumstances ; for, without entering into the difficulties connected with the miraculous, we cannot but observe that, while they all seem to relate the same general fact, they differ in regard to the locality, the time, the words spoken, the number of the disciples who were present, and the date at which the Spirit was given. It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the accounts represent in different ways the general belief that Christ did not found a Church during his earthly life, and that it owed its immediate origin to the working of his spirit in the hearts of his disciples after his decease.<sup>2</sup>

What, then, we must ask, constitutes the Christian Church, and by what marks are we to recognize it ? In the first place, it seems clear that we must limit it to those who profess themselves disciples of Christ. If, indeed, we could retain the original title, 'the Church of God,'<sup>3</sup> it would not be proper

<sup>1</sup> xx. 19 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> See this subject treated in a similar way by the Catholic, Alfred Loisy, *Autour d'un petit livre*, 1903, pp. 163 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> I Cor. i. 2, x. 32, xi. 22, xv. 9 ; II Cor. i. 1 ; Gal. i. 13 ; I Tim. iii. 5, 15 ; in the plural, I Cor. xi. 16 ; I Thess. ii. 14 ; II Thess. i. 4. This general designation is retained in the opening of Clement, *Ad Cor.*, of the Epistle of Polycarp, and of the Epistle on the Martyrdom of Polycarp. In Ignatius,

to insist upon this limitation. It seems pretty clear that Paul, notwithstanding his intense Christian convictions, recognized the existence of churches of God beyond the limits of Christianity ; for when he speaks of ‘ the churches of Judæa which are in Christ,’<sup>1</sup> and of ‘ the churches of God which are in Judæa in Christ Jesus,’<sup>2</sup> the reference to Christ is apparently added to distinguish the Christian churches from others. The Jewish synagogues were also churches of God, and all congregations of whatever name which meet together for the worship of God might justly come under this designation. The totality of such churches may represent the kingdom of God as existing at present in the world, if at least we add a certain number of devout persons who for various reasons do not care to attach themselves to any religious institution. Paul, however, clearly looked upon this separation as temporary. He believed that Christ, the second Adam, the spiritual man, was the divinely appointed head of the great human fraternity of the children of God, and that at no distant date he would gather together the scattered members of this divine assembly into a visible unity. The narrowness and exclusiveness of Christians, and the imposition of tests which Christ never commanded, rendered impossible the fulfilment of this inspired dream ; and we are therefore compelled to look upon the Christian Church as only one branch of the Church of God. In taking this view we deny nothing of its divineness ; we only refuse to exclude God from the rest of mankind, and to trace to a satanic source the goodness which has existed so abundantly outside the Christian fold, and we still believe with St. Peter that ‘ in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.’<sup>3</sup> Bearing this distinction in mind, we must now confine our

*Ad Philad.* and *Ad Smyrn.* the name of Jesus Christ is added, ‘ to the Church of God the Father and of Jesus Christ.’ The simpler phrase, ‘ the churches of God,’ is found in *Ad Tral.* xii.

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 22.

<sup>2</sup> I Thess. ii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Acts x. 35.



attention to the Christian Church, and must limit that Church to the professed disciples of Christ. If in a very broad sense we may, with Justin Martyr, say that Heraclitus and Socrates were Christians, it would nevertheless be absurd to say that they were members of the Christian Church.

If we inquire into the formative idea of the Church, we may avail ourselves of the comparisons which we find in the New Testament. It is a temple in which the Spirit of God dwells. It is an organized body, possessing several members with different functions, all animated by one spirit, and owning one Head, Jesus Christ, whose life permeates every part.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Church, if it is true to its ideal, must enshrine within itself, and hold up before the world, the fulness of life in Christ ; and any particular Church is true and living just in proportion as it is governed by and manifests this life. Since it is a society, the life of the Church must not only be apparent in the activity of the several individuals composing it, but must find collective and organized expression ; and this it does through public worship and public teaching. The best known Protestant definitions, as we have seen, include the due administration of the sacraments. This inclusion, however, does not correspond with the facts ; for the Society of Friends has no sacraments, and, if we judge them by Christ's own tests, the Quakers are among his truest disciples, and only narrowness and prejudice can exclude them from the Christian commonwealth. The Catholic definition, though afterwards limited in its application, is intrinsically broader than the Protestant ; and, with some variation of that model, we may venture to define the Church as the Christian commonwealth, and congregations of professing disciples of Christ ; those namely who have been called to the light of truth and the knowledge of God through faith, and who assemble for the common worship of the true and living God with piety and holiness, and for the advancement of the kingdom of God in the spirit of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. iii. 16, xii. 4-28 ; Eph. i. 22, iv. 4-16, v. 23 ; Col. i. 18, 24.



We must now attend to the 'notes' of the Church. The first, unity, is the only one that occasions real difficulty. In the existing state of things we must either pick out one particular denomination as the only true Church, and treat all others as schismatical or heretical, or we must admit that Christendom is one only through the invisible unity of the Spirit. Between these two views one who looks fairly at the facts can hardly hesitate. There is no Church which stands apart in the solitary splendour of its spiritual graces, and commands our allegiance either by the superiority of its aims or by the unique manifestation of the divine life in its members. In all the groups into which Christendom is divided, not excepting the despised Unitarians, the lofty ideal of holy living is maintained, and men are to be found whom Christ would recognize as brothers, and who bear in their hearts the seal of his spirit. It is only the perverse invention of bigotry that can deny this fact or reduce it to insignificance; and we must therefore acquiesce in the proposition that Christendom is held together in unity only by the invisible bond of the Spirit of Life in Christ, which, wherever we turn, is the acknowledged rule and the more or less evident reality.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to rest content with the division of Christendom into a multitude of rival sects. The old ferocity is indeed greatly assuaged, chiefly through the wisdom or the necessities of statesmen; but there is still abundant bigotry, and, even where personal animosities have disappeared, religious communion with those who do not belong to the same party is contemptuously refused. This shows that the action of the Christian spirit has not been sufficiently powerful to fuse together the discordant elements of human thought and passion; and owing to this want of some heavenly and all-subduing force the Christian Church appears far unlike the picture of one fold under one shepherd which floats before the devout imagination. Where, then, does the fault lie? Two principal answers may be given.



First, large and dominant Churches ascribe it chiefly to the insolence of minorities, who through self-will have abused the right of private judgment. Thus no less a person than Mr. Gladstone, while deprecating the too harsh suppression of private judgment by the Church of Rome, assumes that all private judgment which separates a man from the Church of England is presumptuous and irreverent ; and he supports this position by an argument which needs careful attention. He says, referring to what he regards as a false claim on behalf of private judgment—‘ A man is to ask himself the question, Does this appear so to me ? but where the matter has appeared differently to the universal Church, is he not also to ask himself the further question, Is it more probable that I or that they should be right ? . . . It will be said that there is a divine illuminating grace given to the individual believer ; so there was and is to the Church, and this great truth, if it alters the relative authority at all, alters it in favour of the Church, and against the private person.’<sup>1</sup> Here we may omit the calm, but quite unhistorical assumption of agreement on the part of the universal Church. Reduced to its simplest terms, the proposition is this, that a large body of instructed and thoughtful men is more likely to be right than an individual. The argument is an unfortunate one for Mr. Gladstone himself ; for by parity of reasoning, we may say that the great Councils of the Roman Church, summoned from various countries, are far more likely to be right than a few English Bishops, who may have been misled by insular prejudice and the constraint of an arbitrary sovereign. As an abstract statement, however, the proposition seems perfectly and even obviously true ; and it is just as true in science as in religion ; and yet, if in deference to it private judgment were suppressed, the world would make no progress, for, from the necessities of the case, universal opinion must be opposed to revolutionary advance. But who would maintain that Copernicus

<sup>1</sup> *The State in its Relations with the Church*, p. 159.



and Darwin were specially insolent and incompetent men ? The thesis, however, raises a serious moral problem in connexion with religion, and we must ask, what is the proper attitude for an individual who, while strongly attached to Christianity, finds himself, after careful inquiry, unable to accept the current dogmas ? He may fully admit the truth of Mr. Gladstone's proposition, and think that the general probabilities point to some defect or obliquity in his own judgment. Nevertheless, he cannot believe or pretend to believe that which appears to him, perhaps wrongly, to be disproved by all the direct evidence. If the Church will not accept him in this frame of mind, then he has no choice but to step forth and become dissentient. Ought he then to be silent, and to smother in his own breast what appears to him, perhaps mistakenly, to be the truth ? That he ought to think long and deeply, and seek a higher guidance than his own transient likings, hardly requires to be said ; but it may be laid upon his conscience that truth is not in his own keeping, and that he is bound by something far different from self-will to make public the grounds of his judgment. We know something of the alleged consensus of the past ; but we do not know the consensus of the future, and our poor judgment may go some little way towards its formation. The only consensus which is of real value is found in the spontaneous concurrence of free judgments ; and a Church which sincerely values the truth will insist on the duty of exercising free inquiry and private judgment, and save these from the evils of presumption and self-will by placing them under the holiest sanctions, and representing them, not as an outrage on reverence and submission, but as an act of high responsibility and devout consecration. That self-will and party spirit have entered only too largely into the divisions of Christendom need not be denied ; but these are the accidents of human weakness and sin which attend all our activity ; and on the whole men have been driven into separation



by loyalty to conviction humbly and prayerfully formed, and by a dread of defiling their conscience and silencing the inward voice of God.

Secondly, those who have been driven, sorely against their will, into separate positions, affirm that the fault lies with the Church of the majority, because it has imposed tests of its own contrivance, which are totally different from the tests prescribed by Christ. The tests laid down by Christ are doing the will of God, having love one towards another, being humble, pure, charitable, self-denying. This judging of men simply by their spiritual qualities runs through the whole of his teaching, and the only thing that he repels as quite alien to him is persistent wickedness and selfishness. Of his requiring belief in a vast system of dogma there is not a trace. Those whom he welcomed as the blessed of his Father were the merciful who, in lowly service, sought to lighten the weight of human woe, while he drove away the workers of iniquity who shouted 'Lord, Lord,' and professed to have prophesied and wrought miracles in his name. So an Apostle declares that the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit,<sup>1</sup> and pronounces a benediction on all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;<sup>2</sup> and the only thing that excites him into the utterance of an anathema is the insistence on prescribed forms and exclusive terms of communion, as though the Spirit of Christ were not sufficient. How utterly the Church has departed from this principle need hardly be said; for its deflection is written in letters of blood on the sad page of Christian history. The famous rule *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, would make a clean sweep of the whole system of dogma and ecclesiasticism, not necessarily as untrue, but as not valid for terms of communion. It applies to the Spirit of Christ alone, as, under God, the one universal and central object of Christian homage, with sovereign sufficiency, when received into the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiv. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. vi. 24.

heart, for wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.<sup>1</sup> In him we are all one ; and the Church's unity is the unity of the Spirit.

The second note of the Church is holiness. This belongs to its essential idea, so that where holiness is entirely absent there is no Church of Christ. Nevertheless, this does not imply that every individual member of the Church is holy in the strict ethical sense. But so far as a man is truly Christian he is conscious of the Spirit of holiness within him, so that beneath that Spirit's revealing light he is able to survey life from the point of view of holiness, and, prompted by his inspiration, to aspire after perfect sanctification in thought, affection, and conduct. And so the Church assembles to shake off the trammels of earth, to adore the holy Lord of Life, and to hear what the Spirit saith. To this note no particular Church can lay exclusive claim. It is apparent in all denominations, though perfect in none ; and any single congregation is truly Christian just in proportion as this note is dominant.

The third note, catholicity, belongs in an eminent degree to the Church as we have defined it, for, far from excommunicating the half of Christendom, it includes all who, with any degree of sincerity, profess and call themselves Christians ; and not only so, but it recognizes that larger Church of God, which consists of all who reverently worship him and seek after spiritual righteousness. Taking the Spirit of Christ as its criterion, it judges of men everywhere, without as well as within the specific Church of Christ, by their possession of that Spirit, and recognizes the spiritual kindred of Christ in those of every age and clime who have made the will of God the rule of their life, and manifested lovingkindness toward their brethren. Christ broke down the barriers that separated good men from one another, and displayed the universal spirit of consecrated humanity ; and so far as we erect fresh barriers, and seek to limit the

<sup>1</sup> See I Cor. i. 30.



kingdom of God by conditions which are not moral or spiritual we cease to share his catholicity.

Lastly, the Church, as we have defined it, is apostolic in this sense, that its existence is due to the labours of the Apostles, and that it rests upon the one foundation which Paul declared to be the only one that could be laid, that it accepts the teaching of Peter that 'in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him,'<sup>1</sup> and that in a large sense it follows the teaching of the Apostles generally. I say 'in a large sense,' because it is apparent from the New Testament that apostolic teaching was not absolutely uniform, and that the Apostles as a body held eschatological views which history has not justified. We must add that a Church, to be truly apostolic, ought to exhibit apostolic simplicity, and to follow the Apostles more zealously in the spirit than in the letter. As we have seen, the Roman Church, which is imitated by the High-church party in England, goes beyond this description, and claims the possession of Divine authority, because it is governed by the Holy Spirit through an apostolic ministry. The meaning of this last phrase is that 'the orders of her clergy come by unbroken succession from the Apostles.'<sup>2</sup> The Roman Church alleges that the apostolic See belongs by pre-eminence to Rome, 'so that communion with Rome makes the Church's mission—that is, her authority to teach—apostolic. Other sees of Apostolic foundation have fallen away into heresy . . . . Sects may preserve the Apostolic succession of bishops, and so may have true orders; but no sect can have Apostolic mission and so be Apostolic, because all mission is lost the moment that a separation from the Roman See is effected.'<sup>3</sup> These words are nearly equivalent

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Addis and Arnold, *Catholic Dictionary*, p. 176.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* The Greek Church insists with no less emphasis on the necessity of Apostolical succession through the episcopate. The bishop is 'a living image of God upon earth,' and is the 'fountain of all the mysteries of the Catholic Church, through which we obtain salvation.' 'Ὁμολογία Δοσι-θέου,' Ὁρος 10.

to the decision of the recent Pope, Leo XIII, who refused to recognize Anglican orders on the ground that bishops 'separated from Peter and his successors lose all jurisdiction.' It is difficult to criticize this doctrine of the Apostolic authority of the Church; for it is declared to be an article of faith, and it is virtually admitted that it rests upon no evidence which is open to the scrutiny of ordinary intelligence. I am far from denying that if it were indissolubly blended with the whole of the religious life, and had no convincing evidence against it, this might be a valid ground for taking it on trust. But in fact it has no apparent connexion with the intimations of the religious spirit, and the inference which is drawn from it that all the sects outside the Roman communion are 'led by the spirit of the devil' appears very like blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. And again, if there is no evidence for it which can appeal to the intellect, the whole history of dogma seems to be strongly against it. Let us only compare the vast pile of ecclesiastical dogma with the simple creed which in early times was supposed to represent the Apostles' belief, and which in its main lines goes back to a very early period. Yet from this document, which the Church has never ventured to cast aside, the dogmas of the Trinity, of the incarnation, of the Deity of Christ, of the personality of the Holy Spirit, of the fall of man, of original sin, of the atonement, of the sacraments, of the authority of the Church, of Apostolical succession, of the inspired Bible, are all absent.<sup>1</sup> Surely this is strong evidence that these doctrines, over which men have fought like savage beasts, and filled their mouths with cursing and bitterness, formed no part of the essentials of primitive Christianity. That there has been an unbroken succession of bishops from the time of the Apostles is quite credible, and that the bishops of the Apostolic Churches for a long

<sup>1</sup> This is frankly admitted, or rather insisted upon, by Loisy, though he does not enumerate *all* the doctrines which I have mentioned. *Autour d'un petit livre*, p. 202.



time maintained Apostolic tradition in comparative purity, and were quite justified in appealing to it against the Gnostics, is altogether probable; but that the tradition should be handed down for centuries with no variation, that no change in knowledge or philosophy should have affected it, that, while through the uncertainties of thought many bishops fell into heresy, one particular See should maintain the pristine faith in absolute purity, is not only highly improbable in itself, but appears to be against the verdict of history when judged by the same principles which we should apply in any other department of historical knowledge.

The foregoing survey may enable us to answer the question, Which is prior, the Church or the individual? That is to say, is the Church a part of the permanent organic life of mankind, without which the individual is not complete, or is it a fortuitous aggregate of men who voluntarily combine for their own purposes? To place the answer to this question on the broadest basis, we may say that the spiritual life itself is a divinely given and constraining principle which draws men together in religious association. We may illustrate this position by the analogy of the State. Whatever may have been the actual origin of the State, it is now prior to the individual, claiming as its own every one born within its territory, and imposing legal obligations upon him. In this it differs from a club or a party, membership in which depends wholly on individual choice. A man may indeed change the State under which he lives, or withdraw himself altogether from civil society; but whereas he must exercise his own preference in order to join a club or a party, he belongs by nature to the State, and can use his preference only for the purpose of withdrawal. So it is, though perhaps in a less marked degree, with religious association. Men are born into the various forms of religion which control their lives; and the religious association which thus encompasses them from their birth claims authority over them, and,

generally speaking, imbues them with a higher, larger, and more perfect life than they could attain through their own solitary efforts. These remarks apply emphatically to the Church of Christ. This is not a sort of private club, which men may join or not just as they please. It is of Divine foundation in the sense already explained, being the permanent organ of Christ's Spirit, shaped and directed through the power of that Spirit, and not through arbitrary or capricious human choice. It claims men as its own, choosing them rather than chosen by them, and, so far as it can, surrounding them from infancy with the rich and manifold life which can belong only to a communion of brethren variously endowed through the operation of the same Spirit. It allows indeed the widest liberty; for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.<sup>1</sup> But it holds above the eccentricity and limitation of individual life a Divine and authoritative ideal, drawing men nearer to the goal of human attainment, the fulness of the life of God in our humanity. In this sense we may find a deep truth in the ancient saying, *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*: apart from spiritual union with his fellows man cannot reach his highest development.

<sup>1</sup> II Cor. iii. 17.



## CHAPTER VI

### MEANS OF GRACE

WE must now proceed to consider the means employed by the Church for the furtherance of the kingdom of God, so far as they have been made the subject of dogmatic definition. An active congregation, led by an inventive and energetic pastor, may adopt many plans which will tend more or less to improve the religious character of the people; but these, being local and temporary, do not enter into a system of doctrine. There are, however, certain functions which in all ages the great majority of Christians have expected the Church to discharge as divinely appointed duties; and in regard to these, various doctrines which require our attention have been held. They relate to what theologians describe as 'the means of grace.' There are, it is alleged, certain external vehicles, instituted by God himself, through which he confers a special and supernatural grace, and which are distinguished on the one hand from human traditions, which may or may not be innocently observed, and on the other from the internal illumination which is sometimes pronounced to be all-sufficient without external aids. These means of grace are the Word of God and the Sacraments. The recognition of both of these is no less explicit in Catholic than in Protestant dogmatics. Pastors are instructed to teach 'totum Christianum aedificium . . . nisi verbi Dei praedicatione et sacramentorum usu undique fulciatur, magnopere verendum esse, ne magna ex parte labefactum concidat.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Cat. Rom.*, Pars II, Cap. i, § xxxii.

### I. The Word of God

The Word of God has been generally identified with the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The place of the Bible as a source of dogmatic truth has been considered in an earlier part of this treatise ; and under the present head it is regarded simply as an instrument through which the Holy Spirit works upon the heart. The early Protestant theologians, rejoicing in their escape from the bondage of tradition, and fixing their religious interest on the Bible, described in glowing terms its effect upon the spiritual life ; and in process of time they made an express distinction between its natural effect, which it might share with other religious writings, and a supernatural, which belonged to it alone.<sup>1</sup> The Word was divided into Law and Gospel. The former comprised the commandments of God, which had the sanction of rewards and punishments, whether in the Old or the New Testament. The Gospel included the promises of pardon and salvation, whether as clearly and fully announced in the New Testament or as anticipated in the Old through prophecies and types. The progress of knowledge and a deeper view of the nature of Christianity have necessarily changed the ancient dogma. While the Bible abounds in golden sayings of imperishable worth, there are other utterances which, if they were Divine words to a lower civilization, have lost for us their power of appeal. Accordingly a modification of the early view has been accepted, and the Word of God has been defined as the Divine doctrine of faith and practice which is contained in the holy Scriptures.<sup>2</sup> This definition, however, still confines the Word of God within the pages of the Bible ; and at the same time it plunges us into a sea of uncertainty, for it does not tell us how we are to distinguish the parts which are the Word of God from the parts which are not. If we are to do this simply through our consciousness of the

<sup>1</sup> See quotations in Grimm, p. 425.

<sup>2</sup> Grimm, p. 424.



higher effect which certain passages exert upon us, this same criterion will apply to other books as well, and that alone will be for each man the Word of God which appeals with felt Divine authority to his own heart and conscience. But it seems clear that this would be too subjective a test, and while it might be true that what any particular man took to be the Word of God was really a part, and for him the most effective part, of it, he would be apt to fix himself within his own limits, and to claim a Divine sanction for his own narrowness, instead of trying to enter into that vaster world where new voices of God would reach him, and his soul would expand towards the infinite life. Primitive Christianity seems to me to teach a very different doctrine from that which the Church so soon took over from Judaism, and which has remained down to the present day. The greatest spiritual thinkers of the New Testament present to us, not the Bible, but Jesus Christ as God's Word to man. It is needless to say that this is the doctrine of the Fourth Gospel, though its profound and far-reaching significance has been flung away, and buried under the philosophical dogmatism of the Greeks. It is not expressed in the same words by Paul; but the meaning is similar, and is all the more impressive because the same great fundamental thought is not delivered to us as a formula, which is capable of heedless repetition, but comes in the glowing utterance of individual conviction. The glory of the old covenant, written and engraven on stones, was passing away; and the new light of the glory of God was shining in the face of Christ, who was the image of God, while round about him the faces of disciples were illumined by the reflected radiance, and changed into the same image from glory to glory. And so men were to be ruled henceforth not by the letter of an ancient Scripture, but by the Spirit of Christ within their hearts; and they would find the eternal Word, not in unchanging precepts and dogmas, but in the unsearchable riches of a soul which was in the



form of God, and filled with the immensity of Divine love.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, from the pages of the New Testament that we derive our knowledge of this gracious figure ; and the fact that it contains the evangelical history, and conveys to us the impression which Christ made upon the hearts of the earliest believers, must give it a unique place in Christian literature. It is not unfitting that it should be accompanied by the Old Testament ; for thus the continuity of religious history is preserved, and we are brought into contact with the slowly expanding faith which culminated in Jesus Christ. In this way the Bible has quite naturally and properly become the sacred book of Christendom, and we may accept it as such without believing it to be infallible or identifying it with the Word of God. Many precious words of God, indeed, it speaks to us if we listen devoutly to it ; and it is right that the reverent reading of it should form an essential part of Christian worship. For though there is no miraculous guarantee that every part is true, and though it brings no magical grace of which it alone is the vehicle, it does come to us laden with the holy associations of many centuries of devotional use, and speaks to us with the accumulated authority of prolonged experience. It is good to surrender ourselves to the impression of its most inspired parts, and humbly apply their lessons to our own hearts and lives. The drawing forth of its finest thoughts, and the application of these to the permanent wants of men, represent the chief uses which should be made of it in the services of the Church. It is there, in the main, that the preacher will find the Word of God which he has to announce ; and if, like a merchant seeking goodly pearls, he has to discriminate those of finest quality from the dull or spurious, he cannot go wrong if he bears in his heart the Spirit of Christ, and applies it to try the spirits whether they are of God. But he must always remember that, so far as is possible to him through prayer

<sup>1</sup> II Cor. iii., iv. ; Philip. ii. 5-11 ; Eph. iii. 8.



and self-dedication, he must speak not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God ; for it is only thus that the Word of God can be made really effective in the Church, and minister grace to the hearers.

## 2. The Sacraments

From the Word of God we proceed to the Sacraments. *Sacramentum* denoted, in judicial proceedings, the sum which was deposited by the two parties ; and this deposit was so called either because it was paid into a sacred place, or because that of the losing party was applied to religious purposes, or possibly because it was a pledge of good faith. The last explanation would accord best with its military use to describe the preliminary engagement of a soldier, and then his oath of allegiance. From the military use it came to signify any oath or solemn engagement, and then is applied to the sacred pledge or bond of union which was recognized by the members of any fraternity. Of this last use there is a good example in Apuleius, where the unfortunate man who was turned into an ass hoped to receive some food from another ass and a horse on the ground that there was a mute and natural sacrament among dumb animals.<sup>1</sup> How and when the term passed into Christianity is not known. It is first found in Tertullian, who clearly connects it with the military oath :—‘ We are summoned to the military service of the living God at the time when we answer in the words of the sacrament.’<sup>2</sup> It is evident that the words used at Baptism, which constituted as it were the oath of allegiance to Christ, might

<sup>1</sup> ‘ Ego rebar, si quod inesset mutis animalibus tacitum ac naturale sacramentum, agnitione ac miseratione quadam inductum equum illum meum hospitium, loca, ac lautia mihi praebiturum.’ *Metamorphoses* iii. 26. I owe the reference to the Rev. J. E. Odgers.

<sup>2</sup> ‘ Vocati sumus ad militiam Dei vivi jam tunc, cum in sacramenti verba respondemus.’ *Ad Martyres* 3. See also *De Corona* 11, ‘ Credimusne humanum sacramentum divino superduci licere, et in alium Dominum respondere post Christum ? ’

fittingly be so described. The term has apparently this reference in a passage where Tertullian, in comparing the New Testament with the Old, says, 'God thus wished to make a new sacrament, in order that he might in a new way be believed to be one through the Son and the Spirit, so that God might now be openly known in his proper names and persons'; for a little before he has referred to 'the truth which is in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit according to the Christian sacrament.'<sup>1</sup> From the actual response of the baptized person the word might be easily extended so as to denote the entire rite of baptism. This rite, again, was analogous to the initiation into the heathen mysteries; and hence probably the term came to represent the Greek *μυστήριον*, and thereby acquired a latitude of meaning which is far removed from its original sense. Justin Martyr compares Baptism and the Lord's Supper to the Greek mysteries, which he thinks were invented by demons as a parody of Christianity.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly the word *μυστήριον* in the New Testament is sometimes translated into *sacramentum* in the Vulgate,<sup>3</sup> though in other passages it is rendered by *mysterium*. Thus *sacramentum* came to be applied loosely to a sacred or mysterious rite or doctrine, as, for instance, by Tertullian to monogamy;<sup>4</sup> but, nevertheless, Tertullian seems to use it specially of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>5</sup> When the meaning of the term came to be more carefully defined, it was regarded as the visible

<sup>1</sup> 'Sic Deus voluit novare sacramentum, ut nove unus crederetur per filium et spiritum, ut coram jam Deus in propriis nominibus et personis cognosceretur'; and shortly before, 'veritatis quae est in patre et filio et spiritu sancto secundum Christianum sacramentum.' *Adv. Praxean*, 30, 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Apol.* I, 62, 64, 66.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. i. 9, iii. 3, 9, v. 32; Col. i. 27; I Tim. iii. 16; Rev. i. 20, xvii. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *De Monogamia* 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Adv. Marc.* iv. 34, 'ad sacramentum baptismatis et eucharistiae admittens.' See also *De Praescr. Haer.* 40, where 'res sacramentorum' and 'sacramenta Christi,' are shown by the context to refer to these distinctively Christian rites.



sign or symbol of invisible divine things.<sup>1</sup> This definition still leaves room for a very wide application ; and accordingly Augustine, in the same treatise in which he suggests it, says that the Israelites ‘were burdened with many visible sacraments . . . in the observance of food and in the sacrifices of animals and in innumerable other things, which were nevertheless signs of spiritual things pertaining to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the Church.’<sup>2</sup> The word is even applied to such an event as the deluge, because it prefigured the future judgment, and redemption through the wood of the cross.<sup>3</sup> These few remarks may be sufficient to explain how the word sacrament came to be applied specifically to certain Christian rites.

It does not belong to our present purpose to trace the history of the doctrine of the sacraments. Suffice it to say that many centuries elapsed before opinion settled down into the fixed Catholic dogma with which our exposition must begin. The *Catechismus Romanus* defines a Sacrament as ‘the visible sign of invisible grace, instituted for our justification.’<sup>4</sup> In order to explain this it is pointed out that of all the things perceived by the senses there are two kinds. Some things have been invented in order to signify something, while others exist not for the sake of signifying something else, but for their own sake alone. To the latter class belong almost all natural objects ; but in the former are included words, writing, standards, images, and other things of a similar kind. For a sign is that which gives us a knowledge of something besides that which falls under the senses, as from a footprint we easily learn that some one has passed. A sacrament belongs to this genus, since by a certain form and similitude it declares to us what God effects in our souls

<sup>1</sup> Thus Augustine says, ‘De sacramento . . . signacula quidem rerum divinarum esse visibilia, sed res ipsas invisibiles in eis honorari.’ *De catech. rudibus* xxvi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xx. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* xix. 8, 9 ; and see xx. 2, 3, and xxvii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Pars II, cap. i. § v.

by his own power, which cannot be perceived by sense. Thus the Apostle calls circumcision, which was the sacrament of the ancient law, a sign of the righteousness of faith. Now, of signs some are natural, as smoke is a sign of fire; others have been invented by men for their own convenience, and appeal to the several senses; for instance, the hoisting of a flag, to the eyes; to the ears, the blast of a trumpet; and, above all, words, which serve to express the inmost thoughts of the mind. In addition to these two classes there are signs which have been divinely given, and which themselves come under two heads. Some have been instituted solely for the purpose of signifying something or conveying an admonition; for instance the purifications of the law, unleavened bread, and many other things belonging to the Mosaic ritual. But others have the power not only of signifying, but of effecting something; and the sacraments of the new law are distinguished by their power of effecting the sacred thing which they declare. The sacred thing thus symbolized and produced is the grace of God, which makes us holy, and adorns us with all divine virtues. Hence we reach a fuller definition of a sacrament: it is 'a thing subjected to the senses, which, by the institution of God, has the power both of signifying and of effecting holiness and righteousness.'<sup>1</sup> By this definition images of the saints, crosses, and other things of that kind, though they are signs of sacred things, are excluded from the class of sacraments.

These mystical signs, instituted by God, signify more than one thing, and declare not only our holiness and righteousness, but moreover two other things which are most closely united with holiness, namely, the passion of Christ the Redeemer, which is the cause of holiness, and eternal life and beatitude, to which our holiness ought to be referred as its end. Accordingly the Doctors of the Church recognized a triple significance in each sacrament: that which brings the memory of

<sup>1</sup> § x.



a thing<sup>7</sup> that is past ; that which indicates and demonstrates another thing which is present ; that which foretells another thing<sup>8</sup> which is future. This view is expressed by the Apostle when he says, all of us who were baptized in Christ were baptized in his death,<sup>1</sup> showing that Baptism is a sign of the Lord's passion ; and again when he says, we were buried with him through Baptism into death, that as Christ rose from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we should walk in newness of life,<sup>2</sup> it is evident that Baptism is a sign of the celestial grace infused into us, whereby we may fulfil easily and willingly all the duties of true piety ; and finally, when he says, if we were planted with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in that of the resurrection,<sup>3</sup> it is apparent that Baptism gives no obscure intimation of the eternal life which we shall obtain through him. We must add that often a sacrament signifies not only one present thing, but more, as the Eucharist, for instance, signifies not only the grace which is given to the recipients but the presence of the true body and blood of the Lord.

There are several reasons why sacraments were instituted. The first is the weakness of human nature, which forbids anyone to aspire to a knowledge of those things which are comprehended by the mind and understanding, except through things which are perceived by one of the senses. A second cause is that our mind is not easily moved to believe those things which are promised to us. As the Lord confirmed his word to Moses by a variety of signs, so Christ our Saviour, when he promised the pardon of our sins, heavenly grace, and the communication of the Holy Spirit, instituted certain signs appealing to our eyes and senses, whereby we might hold him bound as by pledges, and should never be able to doubt that he would be faithful in his promises. The third cause was that they should be at hand as remedies for recovering or maintaining the health of our souls. For

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 3.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 4.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 5.



the virtue which flows from the passion of Christ, that is, the grace which he earned for us on the altar of the cross, ought to be diffused in us through the sacraments, as through a channel; otherwise no hope of salvation could be left to anyone. A fourth cause rendered the institution necessary, namely, that there should be certain marks whereby the faithful should be known, and should be at once distinguished from unbelievers and united among themselves by a sacred bond of visible signs. Fifthly, by the sacraments we profess our faith in the sight of men. Hence they not only have great efficacy in exciting faith in our own minds, but also in inflaming that love which we ought to have among ourselves when we recollect that by the communion of the sacred mysteries we are bound to one another in the closest ties, and made members of one body. Finally, they subdue the pride of the human mind, while, in obedience to God, we are compelled to subject ourselves to the elements of sensible things.

Every sacrament consists of two parts, the matter and the form. The matter, which appeals to the eyes, as the water in Baptism, is technically called 'the element.' The form is imparted by 'the word,' which is apprehended by the ears. This is indicated by the Apostle when he says 'Christ loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it, that he might sanctify it, cleansing it with a bath of water in the word of life.'<sup>1</sup> The words are to be added to the matter in order that the signification of what is done may be made clearer; for the element by itself might symbolize different things, as water might signify cooling as well as cleansing. Hence there is a prescribed form of words, which are necessary for the validity of the sacrament. To these necessary parts are added ceremonies, which cannot indeed be omitted without sin, unless necessity compel; but, nevertheless, if they are omitted, the efficacy of the sacrament is unimpaired. They conduce to a reverent

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 25, 26. The *vitae* of the Vulgate is not represented in the Greek.



administration, and lift to higher thoughts the minds of those who are present, and awaken in them faith and charity.

The Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments, all instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord, namely, Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony.<sup>1</sup> These seven are not equal in necessity and dignity. There are three which are specially described as necessary : Baptism, for every one individually : Penance, for those only who after Baptism fall into mortal sin ; Orders, for the Church as a whole. But in regard to dignity and sanctity the Eucharist far surpasses the rest.

The sacraments contain the grace which they signify, and confer it upon those who do not put an obstacle in the way, so that the grace is bestowed *ex opere operato*. Since the ministers appointed to celebrate the sacraments bear, in that sacred function, not their own, but Christ's person, it follows that whether they are good or bad, provided they use the form and matter instituted by Christ, and intend to do what the Church does in that administration, they truly complete the sacraments, and nothing in them prevents the fruit of grace, for it is God who gives the increase. This doctrine of intention is explained in a very broad way by Bellarmin.<sup>2</sup> He says it is not necessary to intend what the Roman Church does, but what the true Church does, whichever that may be, or what Christ instituted, or what Christians do ; for these come to the same thing. He who intends to do what the Church of Geneva does intends to do what the universal Church does, because he thinks it is a member of the true universal Church. The error of a minister about the Church does not remove the efficacy of

<sup>1</sup> Conc. Trident. Can. et Decr., Sessio vii. Can. i. The number seven was finally fixed by the Council of Florence in 1439. The Greek Church recognizes the same seven *μυστήρια*, except that Unction is applied to sick people who are not necessarily *in extremis*. See Mogilas, 'Ορθόδοξος 'Ομολογία, πρῶτον μέρος, ἀπόκ. 98, and 'Ομολογία Δοσιθέου, ὅρος 15.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Winer, *Comparative Darstellung*.



a sacrament, but only the defect of intention can do so. And hence it is that in the Catholic Church those who have been baptized by Protestants of Geneva are not rebaptized. There is some difference of opinion, however, among Catholic theologians as to the precise meaning of intention ; but it is generally held that the want of internal intention would not invalidate a sacrament provided the minister had the will seriously to perform the rite prescribed by the Church, and to do nothing which is calculated to show a contrary intention. On the other hand, the intention to perform the outward rite, but in mockery or in play, would confessedly not make the performance valid.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, ministers are bound to remember that the sacraments never lose their Divine virtue, and that they bring eternal perdition to those who administer them impurely ; for it is a grievous sin for one who is conscious of many sins to celebrate the sacred mysteries with a polluted mouth, or to take them into foul hands, and offer them to others.

Passing now to the effects of the sacraments, we must observe in the first place that the communication of justifying grace is common to them all. In what way this is effected cannot be understood by human intelligence ; for nothing sensible is by its own nature endowed with the power of penetrating the mind. Therefore in early times the reality of this operation was confirmed by miracles. Not to mention the fact that heaven was opened and the Spirit descended at the Baptism of the Saviour, which refers rather to the signification of Baptism than to the administration of the sacrament, we read that, when on the day of Pentecost the Apostles received the Holy Spirit, there was suddenly a sound from heaven, and tongues as it were of fire appeared to them ; whence it is understood that by the sacrament of Confirmation the same Spirit is given to us. When faith was fully established these miracles ceased. The sacraments work the grace which they signify by virtue

<sup>1</sup> Addis and Arnold, *Catholic Dictionary*, p. 738.



of Christ's blood. There is a second effect which is not common to all. The indelible character which they impress on the soul is peculiar to three only, Baptism, Confirmation, and Orders. This character serves to render us fit for undertaking or transacting something sacred, and to distinguish one from another by some mark. These three sacraments, therefore, are never to be repeated.

I have taken this long account mainly from the *Catechismus Romanus* because I think it is an admirable exposition of the whole doctrine of sacraments. While the doctrine of the Greek Church does not differ substantially from that of the Roman, the Protestant bodies, though for the most part retaining a doctrine of sacraments, deviate from the Catholic position, and are by no means in agreement among themselves. Their definitions are not always perfectly clear; but, if we set aside the Society of Friends, who reject sacraments altogether, their main division turns upon the question whether the sacraments are real channels of a special grace, which is conferred in no other way, or are simply signs of God's grace and goodwill towards us. It will be sufficient to cite a few leading authorities. The earliest definitions are not very complete. According to the *Augsburg Confession* 'Sacraments are signs and testimonies of the will of God towards us, for exciting and confirming faith in those who use them';<sup>1</sup> and the *Apology* defines them as 'rites which have the command of God, and to which has been added a promise of grace'; and it is by these two marks that they are distinguished from human ceremonies.<sup>2</sup> Dorner, representing the modern Lutheran view, says 'the Sacraments are sacred actions, instituted by Christ and connected with the Word of God, in which, under outward signs, invisible grace is not merely preached, but dispensed to the individual receptive thereto by Christ Himself, to whom the Church is merely an organ. The benefit of this offered grace is personally appropriated by

<sup>1</sup> Art. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Art. 7.

faith'; and, a little further on, 'the Sacraments are personal acts of Christ to persons.'<sup>1</sup> The Church of England's definition is as follows:—'Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our Faith in him.'<sup>2</sup> In the words of the Westminster Confession, 'Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits, and to confirm our interest in him; as also to put a visible difference between those who belong unto the Church and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to his word.'<sup>3</sup> The Zwinglian or Reformed doctrine in its extremest form is given in the *Confessio Tetrapolitana*, 'non solum quod sunt invisibilis gratiae visibilia signa, sed etiam quod his quasi fidei professio fiat.'<sup>4</sup> Amid the varieties, however, of Protestant opinion, which receive notice and condemnation from the Council of Trent, there are three main differences which distinguish Protestant doctrine generally from Catholic. First, Protestants, after some little vacillation, recognize only two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the other five acknowledged by Catholics not having 'any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.'<sup>5</sup> Secondly, Protestants do not think the sacrament valid *ex opere operato*, but maintain that the recipient not only must offer no obstruction, but can receive the proffered grace only through

<sup>1</sup> *A System of Christian Doctrine*: translation, 1882, Vol. IV, pp. 270 and 275.

<sup>2</sup> Article xxv. 'Effectual'—*efficacia*, indicating that the sign is productive of an effect.

<sup>3</sup> xxvii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Gumlich, *Christian Creeds and Confessions*, trans. by Wheatley, 1893, p. 70.

<sup>5</sup> Article xxv. of the Church of England.



faith.<sup>1</sup> The Church of England seems to make even a more extensive demand upon the recipient :—‘ In such only as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect or operation : but they that receive them unworthily purchase to themselves damnation.’<sup>2</sup> With this the Westminster Confession agrees :—‘ Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament [the Lord’s Supper], yet they receive not the thing signified thereby ; but by their unworthy coming thereunto are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to their own damnation.’<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, the Protestants, in making the effect of the sacraments depend so largely on the state of mind of the recipient, go even beyond the Catholics in holding that the unworthiness of the ministrant cannot invalidate them, for they believe that he need not even have the intention of doing what the Church does. This is quite explicit in the Westminster Confession :—‘ Neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it, but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution,’<sup>4</sup> or, as the Church of England expresses it, on ‘ Christ’s institution and promise.’<sup>5</sup>

It is not easy to offer any criticism of the Catholic doctrine of sacraments, not only because they are regarded with such profound conviction and attended by such deep religious experiences, but also because there is no very clear evidence by which the doctrine appears to be supported. The sacramental system is defined by Dr. Paget as signifying ‘ the regular use of sensible objects, agents, and acts as being the means or instruments of Divine energies, “ the vehicles of saving and sanctifying power.” ’<sup>6</sup> Dr. T. B. Strong says yet more explicitly, ‘ The material side of the Sacrament is not merely a suggestive and picturesque presentation of a spiritual idea which is wholly apart from it : the spiritual

<sup>1</sup> *Augsburg Confession, and Apology*, l. c.

<sup>2</sup> Article xxv.

<sup>3</sup> xxix. 8.

<sup>4</sup> xxvii. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Art. xxvi.

<sup>6</sup> *Lux Mundi*, 1st ed., p. 406.



effect is, in some sense, conveyed by it, so that in normal circumstances the effect is conditional on the occurrence of the material event.’<sup>1</sup> He adds that ‘This was certainly the principle on which we find the Apostles acting.’ In proof of this he appeals to the baptism of Cornelius and his companions after they had received the Holy Ghost, and to the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul by solemn laying on of hands after they had been called to the work, though in either case it might be supposed that the ceremony, if not intrinsically necessary, could have been dispensed with. But surely these facts are opposed to the sacramental idea; for the spiritual grace was received first, and then was acknowledged by an act of consecration. Baptism was the customary mode of initiation into the Church, and was therefore the recognized way of admitting the just claims of these Gentiles to be regarded as Christians. And again the laying on of hands was a beautiful and impressive ceremony; but where is the evidence that the mere physical performance conveyed any grace which might not have been conveyed through some other kind of appropriate action, or that it would have had any effect at all apart from the solemnity of the action and the prayerful wishes of the assembly? Dr. Paget’s essay is largely devoted to the somewhat needless task of pointing out the intimate union of the material and the spiritual. No one doubts that material organs are made the vehicles of spiritual power; and the definition would apply to the whole practice of public worship, and the regular use of any ceremonial for religious ends. That a ceremony touched with holy associations, and observed with reverence, prayer, and faith, will bring an increase of religious power and love is attested by experience. But this is not the question. Sacraments are distinguished from ceremonies in general by certain peculiar marks; and it is claimed for them that the precise observance of certain forms will have a unique efficacy in the bestowal of grace, and that these forms

<sup>1</sup> *God and the Individual*, 1903, p. 90.



have been prescribed by God himself. So Dr. Paget says, 'He has, with the certainty of His own unchanging word, promised that the unseen gift, which is the power of saintliness in sinful man, shall be given to all faithful, humble souls by ordered means through appointed acts. We need not vaguely hope that we may somehow receive His grace; for He has told us where and how we are to find it, and what are the conditions of its unhindered entrance into our souls. We need not be always going back to wonder whether our sins have been forgiven, or laboriously stirring up the glow of a past conviction; for there is a ministry which He has empowered to convey to us that cleansing glory which is ever ready to transfigure penitence into peace and thanksgiving.'<sup>1</sup> This passage exhibits the devout feelings with which sacraments are regarded, and the kind of character which the observance of them tends to produce; but it does not tell us where or when the promise was made, or the forms instituted, or the ministry appointed, and all this, so far as I can discover, is pure imagination. And again, I do not know any proof in experience that the Catholic or the High-Churchman has any advantage in regard to these mysterious movements of Divine grace over the 'faithful, humble' Dissenter, who has only an unauthorized ministry, or even over the Quaker, who repudiates ceremonial altogether. The words which I have quoted from Dr. Paget are preceded by an argumentative appeal:—'Is the greatest effort to be demanded of us just when our strength is least and our light lowest? Surely it is not His way to be thus arbitrary in compassion, thus desultory and precarious in showing mercy. Surely He would not have us stray and faint and suffer thus. No, His compassions fail not; and, with the orderliness of a Father's love, He has made us sure of all we need; and the historic Church and the triumphs of His saints declare that He is true.' These words, so pious and trustful in tone, seem to me to betray a curious narrow-

<sup>1</sup> loc. cit. pp. 432 sq.



ness of view which besets so many Christians, and really to establish precisely the opposite of the desired conclusion ; for the practical result of the thesis is that God is altogether arbitrary in compassion, and desultory in showing mercy ; for the supernatural grace is therein limited to a small fraction of mankind, having been withheld from the entire human race through unknown thousands of years, and at the present time leaving the great majority of men in ignorance of the wonderful provision which has been made for the bestowal of saintliness. Surely it is not his way to be thus precarious in showing mercy. Is he the God of Christians only ? Is he not also of Gentiles ? Yes, of Gentiles also ; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all who call upon him.

For my own part, then, I would not deny, but universalize the doctrine of sacraments. That God works upon the soul through material means is simply a statement of religious experience. In this sense all nature is sacramental to every reverent and waiting heart, and some of its sublime scenes open up deeps of adoration and awe that yield to no other touch. In a sacrament, however, the matter does not appeal to us by its beauty or grandeur, but by its symbolic meaning and the venerable associations which cluster round it. Again, if we wish to give the word a distinctive meaning, we cannot apply it to a symbol unattended by some kind of ceremonial, in which words are used which explain the meaning of the symbol and tend to enforce the lesson which it is calculated to convey. Thus the Passover might be described as a sacrament. It was a symbolical meal, accompanied by spoken words, which recalled the deliverance from Egypt, and was calculated to awaken feelings of gratitude and devotion in every Israelitish mind. The feelings awakened must bear some relation to the thing signified, and will be higher or lower in character according to the elevation and spirituality of the religion which they seek to express ; but God will not withhold his blessing



from any in which the heart yields itself to holier impressions than come to it in the turmoil of the world. On the other hand, I can find no evidence that the mere *opus operatum* has any effect upon a mind which is listless and indifferent, and resorts to the ceremony as to a piece of magic which will secure the favour of God. This kind of reliance, which is looked upon as contemptible superstition in alien religions, is surely no less superstitious in a Christian than in a savage, and receives no justification from the pages of the New Testament. We see here the element of danger which has driven so many to repudiate sacraments altogether, and to find in them an incumbrance rather than a help. Each one must judge for himself where he finds the highest incentive to holy living; but it is no superstition that ceremonies touched with the special sacredness of holy recollections and aspirations are means of a peculiar grace, so long as the form is kept in due subordination to the spirit.

We must now pass on to the consideration of the several kinds of sacrament. Baptism of course occupies the leading place, because it is 'as it were the portal by which one enters the communion of the Christian life.'<sup>1</sup> Owing to this it is sometimes called by other names, such as *sacramentum fidei*, and *illuminatio*.<sup>2</sup> In considering its significance we may start with an exposition of the Catholic dogma. Baptism is defined as 'a Sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.' This definition is based upon the saying of Christ, 'Unless a man shall be reborn from water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,'<sup>3</sup> and upon that of the Apostle, 'cleansing it [the Church] with the bath of water in the word';<sup>4</sup> for by nature we are born children of wrath, but through Baptism we are reborn in Christ as sons

<sup>1</sup> *Cat. Rom.*, Pars II, cap. ii. § iv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> John iii. 5, where the original is the simple γεννηθῆναι, but the other form is in verse 3, where ἄνωθεν is added.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. v. 26.



of compassion. The Sacrament is performed by ablution, for which, by the institution of the Saviour, fixed and solemn words are necessarily employed. The matter or element, then, is every kind of natural water, sea, river, marsh, well, or fountain. Accordingly it was symbolized by the flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, the cleansing of Naaman, the pool of Bethesda, and many other things of that sort. There are many reasons for the selection of water as the element. First, as this Sacrament is necessary for all without any exception, in order to obtain life, the matter is of a kind which may be easily procured by every one. Secondly, water best signifies the cleansing effect of Baptism. Thirdly, as water cools the body, so Baptism extinguishes, to a great extent, the ardour of desire. Nevertheless, whenever Baptism is celebrated with solemn ceremonies, the sacred chrism is added, whereby the effect of Baptism is more fully declared. The form consists of the words, 'I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,' in accordance with the commandment of Christ as preserved in Matthew xxviii. 19. All parts of this formula, however, are not equally essential, and the form used by the Greek Church is valid—'Let the servant of Christ be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' The Apostles, indeed, acting under inspiration, baptized only in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in order that in the beginning of the Church his Divine power might be more clearly set forth; but he who pronounced Jesus Christ signified at the same time the Father by whom, and the Holy Spirit with whom he was anointed. There are three valid modes in which the water may be applied: by immersion, by pouring the water over the baptized, and by sprinkling; but in every case the water should be applied especially to the head, and the form of words must be pronounced at the same time. Though Baptism was instituted before the passion, nevertheless it was from the passion that it derived its efficacy.



Of those who may administer Baptism there is a triple order. First are the bishops and priests, who exercise this function by their own right, so that priests may administer even if a bishop be present. The second place is occupied by deacons, who may not administer without the permission of a bishop or priest. The third order consists of those who, under pressure of necessity, can baptize without the accompanying ceremonies; and this includes all, even the laity, whether men or women, Jews, infidels, and heretics, provided it is their purpose to effect that which the Church effects in this kind of administration. This generous view was confirmed, under an anathema, by the Council of Trent.<sup>1</sup> What might appear such laxity is due to the goodness of our Lord, that no one might be deprived of a necessary rite; and the laity are forbidden to use the solemn ceremonies, not because these have more dignity, but because they are less necessary than the Sacrament. Nevertheless, becoming order must be observed. A woman may not administer if men be present, nor a layman in presence of a cleric, nor a cleric in presence of a priest; except in certain cases, where a midwife may baptize, though a man is present.

The use of Sponsors (*patrini*, formerly *susceptores*, *sponsores*, *fidejussores*) is due to the fact that 'Baptism is a spiritual regeneration, through which we are born sons of God'; and as infants are committed to the care of a nurse or pedagogue, so those who enter on the spiritual life are committed to the faith and care of some one by whom they can be instructed in the Christian religion. The person baptizing, the baptized, the sponsor, and the parents of the child are, by the rule of the Catholic Church, united in such close affinity as to be precluded from marriage among one another. It is the duty of the sponsor to admonish the growing child to preserve chastity, to love justice, to maintain charity, and, above all, to teach the creed and the Lord's prayer, together with the Decalogue and the rudiments of the Christian religion.

<sup>1</sup> Sessio vii. Can. iv.

Accordingly this care must not be entrusted to heretics, Jews, or infidels. In order to prevent confusion through a multitude of teachers, and also not to multiply restrictions upon marriage, it has been laid down that there should be only one sponsor, a man or a woman, or at most two, a man and a woman.<sup>1</sup>

Every one, though the offspring of believing parents, if he be not reborn through the grace of Baptism, is begotten into eternal misery and destruction, as is proved by the words, 'Unless a man be reborn from water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' That this law is to be understood as referring not only to adults, but to infants, and that the Church has received this view from apostolic tradition, is proved by the authority of the Fathers. Moreover Christ, who said 'Suffer little children to come unto me,' would not have refused to children the Sacrament and grace of Baptism. Further, Paul baptized a whole family; circumcision was a figure of Baptism; and finally, as boys contracted original sin through the guilt of Adam, much more can they obtain grace and righteousness through Christ, in accordance with the declaration of Paul in Romans v. 17. It may not be doubted that they receive in Baptism the Sacrament of faith; not because they believe with the assent of their own mind, but because they are fortified by the faith of the parents, if these are believers, and, if not, by the faith of the universal society.

The first effect of Baptism is the remission and pardon of all sin original and actual. No roots of sin are left behind; and though desire remains as an infirmity, yet, not having the consent of the will, it is far removed from the true nature of sin. The second effect is the remission of the punishment due to sin; but this does not apply to punishments inflicted by civil judgments in accordance with the laws. We do not enter at once on the perfect life such as

<sup>1</sup> Conc. Trid. Can. et Dec., Sessio xxiv., *De reformatione matrimonii*, cap. ii.



belonged to Adam, because Christ himself bore the weakness of human nature until his death ; because we shall obtain more ample reward when we have borne patiently the inconveniences of life ; and because, if bodily gifts followed Baptism, many would come to it in pursuit of temporal advantages. The third effect of Baptism is the infusion of grace, a Divine quality, whereby we are made sons of God and heirs of eternal salvation. This is attended by the retinue of all the virtues. We are united with Christ our Head, from whose plenitude Divine virtue is diffused. The character with which we are thus sealed is indelible. And finally, access to heaven, previously closed on account of sin, is opened to each of us. Yet, strange to say (though we are told that it ought not to seem strange to anyone) we cannot perform pious and honourable actions without great difficulty and labour, because the virtues from which actions themselves proceed have not been given to us by the beneficence of God. Owing to the permanence of the character which it confers, Baptism must not be repeated. In doubtful cases the most diligent inquiry must be made, and only when there is real uncertainty is it allowable to use the form, ' If thou hast been baptized, I do not again baptize thee ; but if thou hast not yet been baptized, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.'

We need not dwell upon the ceremonies which accompany Baptism, when there is a proper opportunity for their observance, as these do not affect its dogmatic significance.

It is unnecessary to present at length the various forms of deviation from the Catholic dogma. The main difference between the Lutheran and the Catholic view lies in the opinion that Baptism removes only the guilt of original sin, while the nature of sin is left in the desire which confessedly is not extinguished. The doctrine of the Church of England, expressed by speaking of Baptism as ' a sign of Regeneration,'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Article xxvii.

and by requiring the prayer that the infant coming to holy Baptism, 'may receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration,' is not very precise, and the Gorham judgment has left room for latitude of interpretation. The Westminster Confession declares that Baptism, as well as the Lord's Supper, may not 'be dispensed by any but by a minister of the word, lawfully ordained.'<sup>1</sup> The Socinians emphatically reject the idea of baptismal regeneration, 'for regeneration is nothing else than a transformation of our reason and will, and a conformity to the doctrine of our Saviour Christ, as the very word regeneration indicates. But a transformation of this kind cannot take place in infants, who do not know which is the right hand and the left . . . But that adults, in whom a transformation of mind and will has place, can be regenerated by water is so far from the truth that it seems even something like idolatry, since that is ascribed to a material thing which ought to be ascribed only to God and his holy word.'<sup>2</sup> The important sect of Baptists, believing that entrance on the Christian life must be a conscious and voluntary act, reject infant Baptism. And finally, the Society of Friends repudiates Baptism altogether.

In criticizing the ecclesiastical doctrine of Baptism the considerations advanced in regard to sacraments in general are applicable. No religious ceremony engaged in with faith and reverence is without its blessing ; but it is not permissible to argue from the experience of religious exaltation that the system with which the ceremony is connected is true, or that the particular form of the ceremony is essential to the result. Pagan religions were not without these higher experiences, and even observances which to us are most repulsive were associated with renewed fervour in the spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xxvii. § iv. Also in the Directory for the Public Worship of God, under 'Baptism.'

<sup>2</sup> *Cat. Racov.*, Section V (or, according to another division, VI) chap. iii., slightly abridged.



life. Referring to 'the inhabitants of Mexico, as well as of Peru,' Professor Max Müller speaks of their sacramental act of Baptism:—'Friends and relations were invited to a feast, the child was carried about in the house, as if to present it to the domestic deities, and while the nurse placed it in water she recited the following words: "My child, the gods, the lords of heaven, have sent thee into this miserable world; take this water which will give you life." Then she sprinkled water on the mouth, the head, and the chest of the child, bathed the whole body, rubbed every limb, and said: "Where art thou, ill luck? In which limb does thou hide? Move away from this child!" Prayers were then offered to the gods of the water, the earth, and the sky. The child had to be dressed, to be put in a cradle, and to be placed under the protection of the god of cradles and the god of sleep. At the same time a name was given to the infant.'<sup>1</sup> The worship of Mithra furnishes an extreme example of that wonderful alchemy by which religious feeling can turn the most revolting rites into life-giving ordinances. The following description is given by Professor Dill:—'The most impressive rite in Mithra-worship was the baptism of blood, called the Taurobolium. . . . The penitent was placed in a trench covered over with planks having apertures between them. A bull was led on to this platform, and with due ceremonial, conducted by the priests, was slaughtered so that the blood streaming from its throat might bathe the votary below. It was esteemed a matter of great importance that not a drop should be wasted, and the subject of the rite used all his efforts to enjoy the full benefit of the sacred flood. The ceremony was a long and costly one, attended by great crowds, with the magistrates at their head. Its effects were supposed to last for twenty years, when it was often repeated. It was believed to work some sort of spiritual cleansing and reform, and the man who had enjoyed such a blessing left the record

<sup>1</sup> *Gifford Lectures, Physical Religion*, pp. 283 sq.



of it on stone, often concluding with the striking phrase, *in aeternum renatus.*'<sup>1</sup> In view, then, of what appears to be a universal spiritual law it is easy to believe that Baptism may have religious uses, and be associated with deep religious experiences; and yet it is impossible to distinguish the baptized from the unbaptized by any obvious moral and spiritual characteristics. When tried by practical tests, the whole dogma crumbles away; and the assertion that God will doom infants to eternal misery because some one has neglected to sprinkle them with water, and pronounce a certain form of words over them, can be exempt from the charge of blasphemy only through the plea of invincible ignorance. Primitive Christianity, however, is not responsible for this revolting dogma. The principle which Christ laid down that nothing which is purely external can defile a man involves the doctrine that nothing which is purely external can sanctify a man.<sup>2</sup> During his earthly life, if we are to

<sup>1</sup>*Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*, 2nd ed., pp. 82 sq. The account of the spring festival of Isis, which is too long to transcribe, is also very instructive: pp. 85 sqq. The taurobolium belonged properly to the worship of Magna Mater, and whether it 'ever became part of the service of Mithra is a disputed point' (see Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 556; also p. 589). Professor Dill suggests that the phrase 'born again to eternal life' was 'perhaps borrowed from the Church' (*Ibid.* p. 558; see also p. 610).

<sup>2</sup> Even as late as the time of Gregory of Nyssa this is clearly recognized, and the idea of the *opus operatum* is emphatically set aside. While defending the sacramental efficacy of Baptism he enumerates as necessary to the completion of the rite these four things, 'prayer to God, and the invocation of heavenly grace, and water, and faith' (Cap. 33); and further on he insists that 'that which takes place has efficacy according to the disposition of heart of him who comes to the dispensation,' so that he must make an orthodox confession (Cap. 39). But more important is his insistence that many who come to Baptism deceive themselves, and are born in appearance only, not in reality; and if men do not become pure in their preferences, and put away their evil practices, he will assert, even though it may be venturesome to do so, that in their case the water is water, and the gift of the Holy Spirit is nowhere manifested in what takes place (Cap. 40). See also Cyril of Jerusalem (*Cat.* iii. 4), 'Neither he who



trust the Synoptics, he laid down no doctrine of any sort in regard to Baptism, and the whole tenor of his teaching is in direct opposition to reliance on a sacred order of men and on a prescribed ritual. The only allusions to Baptism are to be found in sayings which he is said to have uttered after his resurrection. This fact might fairly be interpreted as an acknowledgment that Jesus, the prophet and teacher, had said nothing about it, and that the institution was due, not to him, but to the Church which professed to carry on his work after his departure from the world. But even if we regard the words as perfectly authentic, while they undoubtedly direct the Apostles to baptize, they say nothing of the permanence of the institution, nothing of the propriety of administering it to those born in a Christian society, nothing of its sacramental efficacy. The words are, however, open to critical suspicion, and therefore afford a precarious basis for our knowledge even of apostolical practice. It is generally admitted that the concluding verses of Mark are not part of the original Gospel; and even if we were sure that they proceeded from Aristion, 'a disciple of the Lord,' we have no reason to suppose that he was a chronicler on whom we can place implicit reliance. The words in Matthew xxviii. 19, on which the special formula of Baptism is based, are open to serious question, because, confessedly, the Apostles did not obey this express command, but baptized simply in the name of Jesus Christ; and this surely would have been impossible, if the order had been really given, amid circumstances of such awful solemnity, by the risen Saviour. Recently, Mr. F. C. Conybeare has placed the formula even under textual suspicion. He noted that in eighteen passages, which have since been increased to twenty-five, Eusebius quotes the verse in this form—'Go ye into

has been baptized with water, but has not been deemed worthy of the Spirit, has perfect grace; nor if anyone become excellent by works, but does not receive the seal through water, shall he enter into the kingdom of heaven.'



all the world, and make disciples of all nations in my name.'<sup>1</sup> Two passages in which the usual text is quoted are contained in the work against Marcellus, which, in Mr. Conybeare's opinion, has been improperly ascribed to Eusebius of Cæsarea. The received form appears also in the letter of Eusebius to his Church which is quoted by Socrates,<sup>2</sup> and also in the Commentary on the Psalms.<sup>3</sup> But even if these texts have been correctly preserved, it is contended that Eusebius was acquainted with, and generally used, a text of the Gospel which omitted the command to baptize. Mr. Conybeare thinks that Justin Martyr and Aphraates also were ignorant of the accepted reading, and says that 'in the writings of Origen and Clement of Alexandria there is no certain instance of Matthew xxviii. 19 being cited in its usual form.' Mr. Conybeare's arguments have been examined in a careful and learned article by Dr. F. H. Chase.<sup>4</sup> He clearly shows how precarious is the evidence relied upon, and probably most cautious scholars will acquiesce in the conclusion with which he sums up the result of his examination:—'The whole evidence—such I believe must be the verdict of scientific criticism—establishes without a shadow of doubt or uncertainty the genuineness of Matt. xxviii. 19.'<sup>5</sup> This, however, does not prove that the words have been correctly attributed to Christ, and have not been inserted by the Greek editor of Matthew. Dr. Chase indeed removes the objection drawn from the failure of the Apostles to use this form by the very interesting suggestion that the words do not prescribe the use of a formula. The Greek is not, baptize *in* the name, i.e., by the authority of, but *into* the name, denoting our incorporation into the body of Christ,

<sup>1</sup> Some of the quotations end with 'nations.' *Zeit. f. neut. Wiss.* II, 1901, pp. 275 sqq., and *Hibbert Journal*, I, pp. 102 sqq. See also Lake, *The Influence of Textual Criticism on the Exegesis of the New Testament*, pp. 8 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> *Ec. Hist.* i. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. cxvii. [cxviii. in the Hebrew], 1-4.

<sup>4</sup> *The Journal of Theological Studies*, July, 1905.

<sup>5</sup> p. 499.



so that the words are an interpretation of the significance of baptism.<sup>1</sup> Still the difficulty remains that where the administration or significance of Baptism is referred to, in connexion with the preposition 'into,' there is no allusion to this solemn and authoritative interpretation. In Acts, people are baptized simply 'into the name of the Lord Jesus.'<sup>2</sup> When Paul dwells upon the meaning of Baptism, he speaks of being 'baptized into Christ,' or 'into his death,' or 'into one body.'<sup>3</sup> We should expect the words, if they were really uttered in the recorded circumstances, to have left a more palpable impression. Even if it cannot be regarded as demonstrated that the saying attributed to Christ is unauthentic it is at least apparent that it affords a very insecure foundation for the amazing doctrine of Baptism which has been built upon it.

A very important text occurs in John iii. 5, 'Unless a man be born out of water and Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' It cannot, I think, be reasonably questioned that, as it stands, this verse refers to Baptism. Professor Lake, however, adduces some considerations which, in his opinion, throw doubt upon the genuineness of the text. First, he infers from the phenomena presented by Matthew and Mark that there was a tendency to insert allusions to Baptism, so as to secure for the ecclesiastical custom the authority of Christ. He refers also to the baptismal confession of the Ethiopian, which has been inserted after Acts viii. 36 in several manuscripts. The question is thus raised whether the words 'out of water and'<sup>4</sup> may not be an interpolation in John. They have no support in the context, which begins with the need of birth from above,<sup>5</sup> and ends<sup>6</sup> with 'So is every one who has been born out of the Spirit,' so that the allusion to water seems entirely out of place. Again, ecclesias-

<sup>1</sup> pp. 500 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> viii. 16, xix. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. vi. 3, 4; I Cor. xii. 13; Gal. iii. 27.

<sup>4</sup> ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ.

<sup>5</sup> Verse 3.

<sup>6</sup> Verse 8.



tical writers manipulate the text to suit the object which they have in view. Thus the Apostolical Constitutions give the saying of the Lord in this form:—‘Except a man be baptized with water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom,’<sup>1</sup> where the idea of regeneration is dropped out of sight in order to make Baptism prominent. The Clementine Homilies read, ‘Except ye be born again with living water, in the name of Father, Son, Holy Spirit, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.’<sup>2</sup> Hilary, supported by the Old Latin and Old Syriac versions and the Sinaitic codex, quotes verse 8 with the addition of the words ‘of water and,’ clearly showing the tendency to insertion.<sup>3</sup> Professor Lake also points out the probability that Justin Martyr read the text without the allusion to water.<sup>4</sup> Without regarding these considerations as conclusive,<sup>5</sup> we cannot but feel that the verse is a very insecure support for a dogma so little congenial to the general teaching of Christ. As the words stand, baptism in water seems to be assumed, as well known to Nicodemus, and the whole emphasis falls on ‘Spirit.’ The operation of the Spirit must be added to the familiar purification by water, or no spiritual regeneration will take place. We must remark further that, if the words be a genuine part of the text, we cannot be sure that they proceeded from Christ himself. They occur in the report of a private conversation, written down more than half a century after Christ’s death, and preserved in a Gospel

<sup>1</sup> vi. 15. Lagarde, however, reads  $\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\eta\theta\hat{\eta}$  with wx; yzt read  $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\sigma\theta\hat{\eta}$ . t stands for the Editio princeps, which is professedly based on a very ancient codex. Internal evidence favours the reading  $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\sigma\theta\hat{\eta}$ , which would be naturally corrected into the proper word. At all events the existence of the reading illustrates Professor Lake’s point.

<sup>2</sup> xi. 26.

<sup>3</sup> See Tischendorf *in loco*.

<sup>4</sup> *The Influence of Textual Criticism on the Exegesis of the New Testament*, pp. 13 sqq.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Chase, in the article already referred to, dismisses the suggestion as ‘a theory which a scientific critic ought never to have put forward,’ pp. 504 sq.



which is coloured by the thought and language of the writer. And lastly, if the words were actually spoken by Christ, they do not say that the rite would be permanently necessary for men born into membership in the kingdom of God, and still less that it ought to be administered to infants, or that the mere administration would have any effect. At most they assert the necessity of Baptism for those who were entering on the higher spiritual life of Christianity. Whether Jesus himself viewed the ceremony in this light seems to me very uncertain. The fourth Evangelist, apparently regarding Baptism chiefly as a mark of discipleship, tells us that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,<sup>1</sup> but immediately corrects himself by the statement that 'Jesus himself did not baptize, but his disciples.' If we can rely upon this account, it may seem that Jesus, acquiescing in the precedent of John, allowed Baptism, but felt, like Paul, that he himself was sent, not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.<sup>2</sup> I see no reason, however, to doubt that the apostolic Church adopted Baptism as an initiatory rite, without which no one could enjoy full membership in the Christian community.

It is apparent from the book of Acts that Baptism was accepted as a matter of course by converts to Christianity. It was the sign and seal of their faith, which definitely committed them to the new movement; but no distinct doctrine is associated with it, nor is any regenerating efficacy attributed to the mere ceremony. When Paul found certain disciples at Ephesus who had not received Christian Baptism, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus;<sup>3</sup> but the

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 1.

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. i. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Three forms are used, *ἐν* (Acts x. 48), *ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι* (Acts ii. 38), and *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα* (Matt. xxviii. 19; Acts viii. 16, xix. 5). Linguistic usage seems to show that the first two refer to the repetition of the name of Jesus during the ceremony, and that the last describes the aim and result of Baptism, indicating that the baptized henceforth belongs to Jesus, the repetition of the name being in this case also implied. See Wilhelm



Holy Spirit did not come upon them till Paul placed his hands upon them.<sup>1</sup> That the two events were not parts of the same ceremony is apparent from the account of the mission in Samaria. When Philip preached, men and women were baptized; but they did not receive the Holy Spirit till Peter and John came down from Jerusalem, and laid their hands upon them.<sup>2</sup> Even more remarkable is the account of the preaching of Peter in the house of Cornelius. The Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word, and it was in consequence of this that Peter allowed them to be baptized, so that the regenerating power was antecedent to, and recognized as a reason for, Baptism.<sup>3</sup> The ceremony was, however, a symbol of moral cleansing, and, being the initial rite of Christianity, was a solemn act of renunciation of the old sinful life, and of entrance on the new life of the spirit. It was to repentance and the acceptance of Jesus through Baptism in his name that the promise of the remission of sins, and of the gift of the Holy Spirit was attached;<sup>4</sup> and so Baptism was not unnaturally spoken of as a washing away of sins.<sup>5</sup> But there is nothing to suggest that the mere *opus operatum*, apart from repentance and a sincere adoption of the Christian faith, was of any avail. So Paul, having enumerated several evil characters that could not inherit the kingdom of God, adds, 'But ye washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.'<sup>6</sup> Probably the washing refers to Baptism; but instead of water we hear of the name of Christ and the Spirit of God as the cleansing elements. Owing to the practice of immersion Paul declares that we were baptized

Heitmüller, *Im namen Jesu*, in *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, herausg. von Wilhelm Bousset und Hermann Gunkel. I Band, 2 Heft. Göttingen, 1903. I take this from a review by Adolf Deissmann, in the *Theol. Literaturzeitung*, April 2, 1904.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 1-6.

<sup>2</sup> Acts viii. 4-17.

<sup>3</sup> Acts x. 44-48.

<sup>4</sup> Acts ii. 38, 39.

<sup>5</sup> Acts xxii. 16.

<sup>6</sup> I Cor. vi. 11.



into Christ's death and buried with him, in order that we may walk in newness of life.<sup>1</sup> Here the language is strongly figurative, and it seems clear that Baptism is regarded as purely symbolical of the great change which was actually wrought by more spiritual agencies. It was an easy extension to speak of it as the 'bath of regeneration.'<sup>2</sup> No doubt it was actually such to multitudes who came to it with a solemn sense of its significance and a sincere adoption of the spirit of Christ as the guide of life. Accordingly the whole Church is spoken of as purified with the bath of water.<sup>3</sup> Those who were baptized into Christ put on Christ like a garment, and, in one spirit, were baptized into one body, where all distinctions of race, of sex, and of social condition disappeared.<sup>4</sup> It is no violent extension of this figurative language when a saving efficacy is attributed to the water of Baptism, as in the old time Noah and his family had been saved through water, especially when the explanation, of rather doubtful meaning, is added, that the saving power was not in the washing of the flesh, but in the 'inquiry of a good conscience after God.'<sup>5</sup> At a time when the Christian community seemed to be the one haven of refuge from the impending judgment, and the one visible organ of the Holy Spirit, it would not be surprising if much stronger language than we have quoted had been applied to its rite of initiation. It was then the most serious and determining act in a man's life, and might be followed by the most momentous personal consequences; and its character, as an actual laving of the body, a plunging into the dark water and a rising again into the light, easily lent itself to symbolical interpretation.

From the above survey of the scriptural evidence we can learn only that Baptism was administered to converts who embraced Christianity from their own conviction and choice.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 3, 4; Col. ii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Titus iii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. v. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. iii. 27; I Cor. xii. 13.

<sup>5</sup> I Pet. iii. 21.



This fact fully explains the strong language which is used in regard to it ; but it does not sanction the application of Baptism to infants, or indeed to adults who have grown up in Christian households, and have never passed into Christianity from an alien world. The latter point exhibits the weak side of the Baptist position ; and it is not surprising that some have altogether rejected Baptism on this account, while others have been repelled from it owing to the hideous superstitions which have been connected with it. If we retain it, we must do so on the ground of long ecclesiastical usage. As a symbol, not of conversion from another religion, but of membership in the Church of Christ, it is properly applicable to infants who have been born of Christian parents, and are to be brought up in Christian nurture ; and it is surely fitting that the gift of a new life should be reverently and thankfully acknowledged by the parents, and that the infant should be received into the blessing of the Church, and should be solemnly dedicated to that spiritual life in the midst of which it is to grow to maturity. Considered in itself, it is of small importance by what ceremony these objects are effected ; but Baptism, which is a simple and inoffensive rite, is justly preferred, as resting on ancient and general usage, and attended by those venerable associations which are inseparable from a seal of discipleship so nearly universal. The use of water has been objected to as having no meaning apart from the doctrine of original sin, and a simple service of dedication is sometimes used. This may no doubt be made impressive and inspiring ; but the symbolic act seems wanting to complete the service, and bring out its full significance. The water may surely symbolize the waters of eternal life which, through the Christian ages, have flowed through so many lands, and purified so many hearts, and which, it is hoped, will well up abundantly with sanctifying power in the new soul now consecrated to God.

As regards the words to be used, some would limit them-



selves to the apostolic formula, and baptize only in the name of Jesus Christ, a form which was still held to be valid at least as late as the ninth century.<sup>1</sup> But the longer formula, which is in general use, expresses more fully the great objects of Christian veneration—the Father, who is above all, and through all, and in all; the Son, the submissive and loving revealer of the Father's will, into whose life the infant is committed, that he too may be a faithful child of God; the Holy Spirit, which works within the Christian heart, and binds the disciples into a sacred fellowship.

Whether we should call this service a Sacrament or not must depend on the meaning which we attach to the word. A ceremony in itself is nothing; but if it appeal to our deepest sentiments, and touch tender and hallowed chords of feeling, it is a way of access to God, and becomes a channel of Divine grace; and so the reverent observance of it elevates our views of life, and strengthens us for the fulfilment of life's duties. Baptism cannot produce an effect of this kind in the infant; but it may express the parents' gratitude and aspiration, and present the child as a holier object to their care and love, and waken in the Church at large a deeper sense of the sacredness of childhood, and the inestimable worth of every soul in the sight of God.

Confirmation is the second Sacrament recognized by Catholics. Its object is to render 'firm by the strength of new virtue' the recipient, who then 'begins to be a perfect soldier of Christ.'<sup>2</sup> The matter of the Sacrament is chrism prepared from oil and balsam, and solemnly consecrated by the bishop. In the application of the chrism to the forehead the form of the Sacrament is completed by the words, 'signo te signo crucis, et confirmo te chrismate salutis, in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.' The ordinary power of

<sup>1</sup> See Rashdall, *Christus in Ecclesia*, 1904, p. 54, note, where he refers to the view of Nicolas I, A.D. 858–867, as contained in Mansi, *Concilia*, Tom. xv. c. 444.

<sup>2</sup> *Cat. Rom.*, Pars ii. cap. iii. § ii.



administering this Sacrament is reserved for the bishop. It ought not to be received till children have acquired the use of reason, so that, if the twelfth year is not waited for, it certainly ought to be postponed till the seventh. It confers a new grace, and it is an impious error to maintain that the baptized are brought to the bishop, when they are adult, simply to confirm the Christian faith which they had adopted in baptism. It also impresses a permanent character, and therefore cannot be repeated. That Christ instituted any such Sacrament there is not a particle of evidence ; for even if the writings ascribed to Pope Fabianus, who perished in the Decian persecution, could be regarded as genuine, his bare assertion would not have the smallest validity. It is owing to this lack of evidence that Protestants have rejected the sacramental character of Confirmation. The rite is retained by the Church of England, and even required as a preliminary to the holy communion ; but it has become a simple religious service, in which the bishop calls upon those who are being confirmed to 'renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in' their 'name at' their 'Baptism,' and then, as they kneel before him, lays his hand upon the head of each, and invokes the Divine grace upon them. If this ceremony is not a Sacrament in the technical sense, no dogma attaches to it, but it becomes purely a matter of Church discipline. A solemn service, preceded by adequate instruction, at the time when the young mind is awakening to its full responsibility, might be extremely valuable, and leave impressions which would last through life. The religious experience, on which alone the Catholic doctrine must ultimately rest, is not bound by special forms, but works through the power of the Spirit in those who speak and those who hear ; and in a large and spiritual sense we might accept Confirmation as a Sacrament, which affords a precious opportunity for impressing the young mind with Christian ideals, and strengthening its resolve to fight the good fight of faith.



The third Sacrament is the Eucharist. This, even in Catholic opinion, is of so holy a character that none other can be compared with it,<sup>1</sup> and it is one of the two Sacraments recognized by Protestant Churches. It is called the Eucharist as an offering of thanks to God for all his benefits towards us, especially our material and our spiritual food. Another name which it bears is 'the Communion,' or 'holy Communion,' as signifying our union with Christ, and with one another in his spirit. It is termed 'the Lord's Supper,' as commemorating the last supper of Jesus with his disciples. It is frequently referred to as *viaticum*, because it is a spiritual food whereby we are sustained in our journey through life, and in our passage to eternal glory and felicity, so that the Catholic Church suffers none of the faithful to depart from life without this Sacrament. According to Catholic discipline it must be received only by the fasting.

As Catholics and Protestants differ widely from one another in their views of this ceremony, we begin with an exposition of the Catholic dogma.<sup>2</sup> This Sacrament differs from others in two respects. The others are completed by the use of the matter in actual administration ; but in this the consecration of the matter is sufficient, and it does not cease to be a Sacrament though it be kept in a box. Again, in the others there is no change in the nature of the matter. Water remains water, and the oil of the chrism does not cease to be oil ; but in the Eucharist that which before consecration was bread and wine becomes, after consecration, truly the substance of the body and blood of the Lord. Though there are two elements, the Sacrament is only one, for it signifies one thing : as food and drink contribute to one end, the renewal of bodily strength, so is it with the two species in the Sacrament, whereby our minds are created afresh. Three things, however, are indicated :—the passion of Christ ; heavenly grace ; and eternal glory :—and thus

<sup>1</sup> *Cat. Rom.*, Pars ii. cap. iv. § i.

<sup>2</sup> Following the statements of the *Cat. Rom.*



past, present, and future are combined. The elements are bread and wine. The former must be made of wheat, and ought to be unleavened, though the presence of leaven does not destroy its sacramental character. The wine must be the juice of grapes, with which a small quantity of water has been mixed, because blood and water flowed from Christ's side, and the water mixed with wine signifies the union of believers with Christ their head. But although the mixture with water cannot be omitted without mortal sin, nevertheless the absence of water does not destroy the Sacrament. The form to be used for the consecration of the bread is the words, 'Hoc est corpus meum'; for that of the wine, 'Hic est calix sanguinis mei, novi et aeterni testamenti, mysterium fidei, qui pro vobis, et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum.' The result of the consecration is that the true body of Christ, which was born of the Virgin, and sits in heaven at the right hand of the Father, is contained in the Sacrament, and that the accidents of bread and wine, which are perceived by the eyes or other senses, remain in some inexplicable way subsisting by themselves, without any substance in which to inhere, since the substance of the bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of the Lord in such a way that it ceases altogether to exist. Nevertheless, the bread is so called even after consecration, because it has the appearance of bread, and retains the natural power of nourishing the body, which is the property of bread. We must add that the body and blood involve the presence of the whole Christ, the God-man, in whose single person the Divine and human natures are united. The immediate effect of the consecration, however, is confined to the body and blood, and the rest follows by way of concomitance, so that in the apparent bread not only the body, but also the blood and the whole Christ are present, and similarly under the appearance of wine not only the blood, but the body and the whole Christ are present. We must add that the whole Christ is contained in each particle of the elements. Christ,



however, is not in the Sacrament as in a place; for the substance of the bread is not changed into a magnitude or quantity, but into the substance of Christ; and substance, as of air or water, remains the same whatever be its dimensions. The change in the elements is known as transubstantiation, a word which received authoritative sanction from the Fourth Lateran Council, in A.D. 1215.<sup>1</sup> That the Sacrament may have its due effect, the recipient must previously have obtained grace. As natural food is of no use to the body that is dead, so to the soul which does not live by the spirit the sacred mysteries are of no service.

A marked peculiarity of Catholic practice, which gave rise to much contention, is the refusal of the cup to the laity. This is justified by an appeal to the language of our Lord in which he refers to the bread alone:—‘Whosoever shall eat of this bread shall live for ever’; ‘the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world’; ‘he who eats this bread shall live for ever.’ The Church has been led by the most weighty reasons to confirm this restriction by the authority of a decree.<sup>2</sup> The following are the reasons: the risk of spilling the blood of the Lord upon the ground; the danger lest, when the Sacrament is reserved for the sick, the apparent wine (*vini species*) should turn sour; many cannot bear the taste and smell of wine; the possibility that what ought to be given for spiritual salvation should injure the health of the body; the scarcity and dearness of wine in many regions; above all, the eradication of the heresy which denies that the whole Christ is under both kinds. Whether this usage, however, should ever be relaxed in favour of any nation or kingdom under certain conditions

<sup>1</sup> ‘Sacrificium Jesus Christus: cujus corpus et sanguis in sacramento altaris sub speciebus panis et vini veraciter continentur; transubstantiatis, pane in corpus, et vino in sanguinem, potestate Divina.’ Labbe, *Concilia*, Tom. xiii., p. 929.

<sup>2</sup> See Conc. Trid., Sessio xxi. cap. ii., where an appeal is made to the Council of Constance, which met in 1414.

has been left to the decision of the Pope, who will judge what is useful to the Christian commonwealth.<sup>1</sup>

The Eucharist, in addition to its sacramental, has also a sacrificial character, and was instituted, not only as heavenly nutriment for the soul, but that the Church might have a perpetual sacrifice, whereby our sins should be expiated, and the heavenly Father, often grievously offended by our wickedness, should be brought over from anger to pity, from the severity of a just animadversion to clemency. The Sacrament is completed by the act of consecration, but the efficacy of sacrifice lies in its being offered; so that the Eucharist, while it is contained in a box, or carried to the sick, has the nature of a Sacrament, but not of a sacrifice. Though Masses may be celebrated in memory of saints and in their honour, the sacrifice is offered to God alone. The sacrifice of the Mass and the sacrifice of the cross are one and the same, the victim being the same. There is also one and the same priest, Christ the Lord; for the officiating minister represents Christ, and says, not 'This is the body of Christ,' but 'This is my body.' The sacrifice is not only a giving of thanks, or a commemoration of the sacrifice on the cross, but is truly propitiatory, rendering God appeased and propitious towards us: 'The Lord is so delighted with the odour of this victim that, imparting to us the gift of grace and penitence, he forgives our sins.'<sup>2</sup> Its efficacy extends to all the faithful, living or dead, who have not yet had complete expiation. Hence no Masses are private, since they relate to the common salvation of believers.

The doctrine thus described is devoutly believed by millions of men,<sup>3</sup> and is associated with the deepest feelings of religious

<sup>1</sup> Conc. Trid., Sessio xxii., Decretum super petitione concessionis calicis.

<sup>2</sup> *Cat. Rom.*, *ibid.* § lxxxv.

<sup>3</sup> The Greek Church also accepts the full doctrine of transubstantiation, *μετουσίωσις*, but extends the cup to the laity, on account of Christ's words, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life' (John vi. 53). See Mogilas, *Ὁρθόδοξος Ὁμολογία*, πρῶτον μέρος,



veneration and love ; and therefore, however little attractive it may prove to a mere outsider, or however remote it may appear from a truly spiritual faith, one would not willingly use any offensive expression in regard to it. It is not necessary to dwell upon the apparent material difficulties :—the supposition that Christ's body remains unimpaired in heaven, and at the same moment is wholly present in innumerable places upon earth ; the apparent impossibility of the properties of a substance remaining after the substance itself has ceased to exist ; and the equally apparent impossibility of a material substance being really present when all its distinguishing sensible properties are absent. To the ordinary intelligence the assertion that a very small substance which every scientific test that can be applied proves to be bread, is in reality the entire Christ, and not bread at all, conveys no meaning, and seems to be a mere juggle of words. It is admitted, however, that this is a ' tremendous mystery,'<sup>1</sup> and involves a perpetual miracle. We need not pause to consider the possible range of miracle, or whether ' modern theories of matter ' remove the seeming physical impossibilities ;<sup>2</sup> for if we are unable to accept the infallibility of the Church, the whole dogma collapses for want of evidence.

To one who judges of the passage in Scripture as he would judge in the case of any other literature, the Catholic interpretation must appear forced and unnatural. When Christ, taking up a piece of bread, said ' This is my body,' or, taking the cup, said ' This is my blood,' what Apostle could suppose that he meant that literally, especially when,

ἀπόκ. 107. In each portion of bread and wine in the various churches, the entire Christ, perfect God and perfect man, is substantially present. Ὁμολογία Δοσιθέου, Ὁρος 17.

<sup>1</sup> *Tremendum mysterium.* Conc. Trid., Sessio xxii., *Decretum de observandis et evitandis in celebratione Missae.* Θαυμαστὸν καὶ πίστει μόνῃ κατάληπτον. Δοσίθεος, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Holy Communion, its Philosophy, Theology, and Practice*, by John Bernard Dalgalns, 3rd ed., 1868, Part I, Chap. ii.

after using the latter words, he referred to the wine as ‘ this fruit of the vine ’ ?<sup>1</sup> Such a use of the substantive verb is far too common to require illustration. We may, however, ask whether, when Christ said ‘ I am the living bread which came down out of heaven,’<sup>2</sup> he meant that he was really a loaf, although he looked like a man ; or again whether, when he said ‘ I am the genuine vine,’<sup>3</sup> he meant that he was actually and literally a vine, in spite of appearances. And when he said, ‘ this do in remembrance of me,’ what simple and untrained mind could imagine for a moment that he thereby appointed his Apostles priests, and ordained that they and other priests should offer up his body and blood ? And yet those who deny that he did so are put under a curse.<sup>4</sup>

There is nothing to show that the language in John vi. refers to the Eucharist. Its highly figurative character seems to be conceded in the words, ‘ The spirit is that which quickens, the flesh profits nothing : the words which I speak unto you are spirit and are life.’<sup>5</sup> It is as though he had said, it is not sufficient for you to stand in a merely outward relation towards me, as of disciples to a teacher ; but you must feed as it were, upon the very substance of my being ; you must have my life-blood circulating in your veins : in other words, you must receive my spirit into your hearts, and allow it to be the ruler and guide of your lives. The figure is not of a kind which we are prone to use, but it is not without parallels in Oriental speech. R. Hillel said the Israelites ‘ had eaten their Messiah in the days of Hezekiah.’<sup>6</sup> So, in Ecclesiasticus, wisdom, strongly personified, is represented as saying ‘ Those who eat me shall yet be hungry, and those

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 29. In Mark xiv. 25 *τούτου* is omitted. In Luke xxii. 18 the order is different.

<sup>2</sup> ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν, John vi. 51.

<sup>3</sup> ἡ ἄμπελος ἡ ἀληθινή, John xv. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Conc. Trid., Sessio xxii., Canon ii.

<sup>5</sup> John vi. 63.

<sup>6</sup> Wetstein on John vi. 51, ‘ Non erit Messias Israeli, nam eum antehac comederunt in diebus Hiskiae (Sanhedrin f. 98. 2).



who drink me shall yet be thirsty.’<sup>1</sup> In Persia, if we may judge from one instance, such language describes murder. Behá’u’llah, referring to an alleged attempt of his step-brother to kill him, says, ‘neither was the belly of the glutton sated till that he desired to eat my flesh and drink my blood.’<sup>2</sup> We may compare with this Psalm xxvii. 2, ‘When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.’<sup>3</sup> See also Psalm xiv. 4, ‘Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? Who eat up my people as they eat bread.’<sup>4</sup>

Appeal is also made to the words of St. Paul:—‘The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?’<sup>5</sup> These words might, no doubt, be explained by the doctrine of transubstantiation; but they also yield an excellent sense when taken less literally. St. Paul is here warning the disciples against idolatry. Now to the Christian the bloodless supper of the Lord took the place of sacrificial feasts among the Gentiles; and as the latter established a covenant of blood among the worshippers, and between them and the idol, so the Lord’s Supper bound the Christians into a holy fellowship through a spiritual participation in the flesh and blood of Christ, who had offered himself, the one true sacrifice, upon the cross. This figure does not suggest itself naturally to us, who have been brought up in a spiritual faith; but it was quite natural at a time when worship everywhere was steeped in sacrifice, and the Christians were engaged in turning what was gross and material into something holy and spiritual. Similarly,

<sup>1</sup> xxiv. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from the *Súra-i-Heykal* by Professor Edward G. Browne, *A Traveller’s Narrative written to illustrate the Episode of the Báb*, ii. p. 368.

<sup>3</sup> LXX, τοῦ φαγεῖν τὰς σάρκας μου. Cf. John vi. 53, ἐὰν μὴ φάγητε τὴν σάρκα.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm xiii. 4 in the LXX, οἱ κατέσθοντες τὸν λαόν μου βρώσει ἄρτον.

<sup>5</sup> I Cor. x. 16.

when in the following chapter he gives an account of the Lord's Supper, and exhorts to reverence in its use, his admonitions are perfectly appropriate even if no change took place in the substance of the bread and wine. He was shocked by learning that the bread and wine were used merely to satisfy the appetite, that men were selfish and greedy, and even got drunk at what was meant to be a sacred meal; and surely whatever may be our doctrine, we must regard this as horrible profanity. Bread and wine consecrated to a religious use cease to be common bread and wine, and those who partake of them ought to surrender their minds to the holy impressions which they are intended to convey; so that he who joined in the Supper of the Lord with no higher feelings than a hungry animal offered an insult to Christ, and shared in the guilt of the undiscerning men who had broken his body and shed his blood upon the cross.<sup>1</sup>

It is unnecessary to enter at length into the history of the dogma. Very early passages may be quoted which seem to favour it. But they are of ambiguous meaning, and admit of a figurative interpretation. The danger of taking figures of speech too literally receives a curious illustration from the coarse abuse in which Calvin indulges when contro-

<sup>1</sup> This familiar fact, of the change wrought by symbolism in our sentiments towards common objects, may help to explain the language of early Christian writers which seems to favour transubstantiation. Cyril of Jerusalem furnishes an instructive example, where he speaks of the sanctifying power of the water of Baptism, which confessedly continues to be simply water:—Ὡςπερ γὰρ τὰ τοῖς βωμοῖς προσφερόμενα, τῇ φύσει ὄντα λιτά, μεμολυσμένα γίνεται τῇ ἐπικλήσει τῶν εἰδώλων· οὕτως ἀπεναντίας τὸ λιτὸν ὕδωρ Πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ Χριστοῦ καὶ πατρὸς τὴν ἐπίκλησιν λαβὼν δύναμιν ἁγιότητος ἐπικτᾶται (*Catech.* iii. 3). Professor Allen quotes even a stronger expression from Cyril of Alexandria:—Διὰ τῆς τοῦ Πνεύματος ἐνεργείας τὸ αἰσθητὸν ὕδωρ πρὸς θεῖαν τινὰ καὶ ἀπόρρητον ἀναστοιχειοῦται δύναμιν (quoted from *In Joan.* 3, 5, in *Christian Institutions*, p. 483, note). He cites, in the same place, a long and interesting passage from Gregory of Nyssa, fully explaining the change in the sacredness of objects, when they are dedicated to holy uses.



verting the Catholic doctrine. Speaking of the Mass, he says, 'This is Helen, for whom the enemies of the truth wield the sword with such madness at the present day, with such fury, with such atrocity, and truly Helen, with whom they so defile themselves with spiritual fornication (which is the most execrable of all).'<sup>1</sup> If the word 'truly' were similarly used of the body and blood, it would be taken as conclusive; here it means, not that the Mass is really a woman, but that it truly stands in the same relation as Helen towards those who are attracted by it. I have read somewhere of a learned man who 'literally devoured whole libraries'! I may refer also to the Easter-day Preface in the celebration of the Communion according to the Book of Common Prayer:—'He is the very Paschal Lamb,' clearly meaning, not that he was really a lamb, but that he truly fulfilled the spiritual idea which was typified by the paschal lamb. Passages may be cited on the other side which are free from this ambiguity, and which are sufficient to prove that the later doctrine was not an accepted dogma in the primitive Church.

The prayers prescribed in the Didache for use at the celebration of the Eucharist contain no allusion to any supposed change in the nature of the bread and wine. A passage of dubious meaning is contained in the Letter of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans. Alluding apparently to the Docetists, he says, 'They refrain from Eucharist and prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ.'<sup>2</sup> A passage in Tertullian, referred to by Lightfoot, fully explains this statement on the supposition of a purely symbolical use of the bread:—'Having taken the bread and distributed it to the disciples, he made it his body by saying "This is my body,"

<sup>1</sup> *Inst.*, IV, xviii. 18. Quoted in a different connexion by Hagenbach, iii. p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Εὐχαριστίας καὶ προσευχῆς ἀπέχονται διὰ τὸ μὴ ὁμολογεῖν τὴν εὐχαριστίαν σάρκα εἶναι τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. § vi.

that is, a figure of my body. Now it would not have been a figure, unless the body were real. But an empty thing, which is a phantasm, could not receive a figure.<sup>1</sup> So he speaks elsewhere of 'bread by which he represents his own body,'<sup>2</sup> and again says, 'Calling bread his body, in order that even from this you may understand that he has given to his body the figure of bread';<sup>3</sup> and again, 'Calling bread his body.'<sup>4</sup> We may also refer to the unqualified way in which, after referring, among other things, to the practice of ratifying a treaty by tasting human blood, he declares that Christians most scrupulously abstained from eating the blood even of animals in their feasts.<sup>5</sup>

Another important passage is that in Justin Martyr's First Apology. After describing the mode of celebrating the Eucharist, he says, 'But as Jesus Christ our Saviour being made flesh through the word of God had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food for which thanks are given through prayer in words received from him, (the food) from which our blood and flesh are nourished by a change, is both flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.'<sup>6</sup> This obscure passage may, I think, receive its true explanation from arguments against Docetism, and against those who denied the immortality of the body,

<sup>1</sup> 'Acceptum panem et distributum discipulis corpus suum illum fecit, Hoc est corpus meum dicendo, id est figura corporis mei. Figura autem non fuisset, nisi veritatis esset corpus. Ceterum vacua res, quod est phantasma, figuram capere non posset.' *Adv. Marc.* iv. 40.

<sup>2</sup> 'Panem quo ipsum corpus suum repraesentat.' *Adv. Marc.* i. 14.

<sup>3</sup> 'Panem corpus suum appellans, ut et hinc iam eum intellegas corpori sui (v. l. suo) figuram panis dedisse.' *Adv. Marc.* iii. 19.

<sup>4</sup> 'Panem corpus suum appellans.' *Adv. Judaeos* x.

<sup>5</sup> *Apol.* ix.

<sup>6</sup> 'Ἄλλ' ὃν τρόπον διὰ λόγου θεοῦ σαρκοποιηθεὶς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ὁ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ σάρκα καὶ αἷμα ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας ἡμῶν ἔσχεν, οὕτως καὶ τὴν δι' εὐχῆς λόγον τοῦ παρ' αὐτοῦ εὐχαριστηθεῖσαν τροφήν, ἐξ ἧς αἷμα καὶ σάρκες κατὰ μεταβολὴν τρέφονται ἡμῶν, ἐκείνου τοῦ σαρκοποιηθέντος Ἰησοῦ καὶ σάρκα καὶ αἷμα ἐδιδάχθημεν εἶναι. § 66.



which Irenæus derives from the Eucharist, together with a passage about the purity of Christian sacrifice. His point seems to be that bread and wine, which belong to the same order of creation as ourselves, were the substance of Christ's body and blood, just as they are of ours, and that therefore his flesh and blood were of the same kind as ours, and not mere appearance. The Eucharistic food enjoyed this distinction in a peculiar sense, because it received the Logos of God, and thus became for the time his material organ. That Irenæus did not look upon the bread and wine as altered in their nature is shown by his reference to the oblation, which he describes, not as an offering of the body and blood of Christ, but of the first-fruits of his gifts to him who affords us nourishment.<sup>1</sup> In an argument against Marcion, where his object is to show that Christ's body was of the same sort as ours, the reasoning would have no validity on the hypothesis of transubstantiation, for the bread and wine could as easily be changed into apparent as into real flesh and blood.<sup>2</sup> The point clearly is that Christ's body

<sup>1</sup> The passages are the following: 'Ἐπειδὴ μέλη αὐτοῦ ἐσμεν, καὶ διὰ τῆς κτίσεως τρεφόμεθα, τὴν δὲ κτίσιν ἡμῖν αὐτὸς παρέχει . . . τὸ ἀπὸ τῆς κτίσεως ποτήριον, αἷμα ἴδιον ὡμολόγησεν, ἐξ οὗ τὸ ἡμέτερον δεύει αἷμα, καὶ τὸν ἀπὸ τῆς κτίσεως ἄρτον, ἴδιον σῶμα διαβεβαιώσατο, ἀφ' οὗ τὰ ἡμέτερα αὔξει σώματα. Ὅποτε οὖν καὶ τὸ κεκραμένον ποτήριον καὶ γεγωνὸς ἄρτος ἐπιδέχεται τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ γίνεται ἡ εὐχαριστία σῶμα Χριστοῦ, ἐκ τούτων δὲ αὔξει καὶ συνίσταται ἡ τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν ὑπόστασις, πῶς δεκτικὴν μὴ εἶναι λέγουσι τὴν σάρκα τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἥτις ἐστὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος; *Haer.* V, ii. 2, 3.

'Suis discipulis dans consilium, primitias Deo offerre ex suis creaturis, . . . eum qui ex creatura panis est, accepit et gratias egit dicens, Hoc est meum corpus. Et calicem similiter, qui est ex ea creatura, quae est secundum nos, suum sanguinem confessus est, et novi Testamenti novam docuit oblationem; quam ecclesia ab apostolis accipiens in universo mundo offert Deo, ei qui alimenta nobis praestat, primitias suorum munerum in novo Testamento.' *Haer.* IV, xvii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 'Examinabit autem et doctrinam Marcionis . . . Quomodo autem iuste Dominus, si alterius Patris existit, hujus conditionis, quae est secundum nos, accipiens panem, suum corpus esse confitebatur, et temperamentum calicis suum sanguinem confirmavit?' *Haer.* IV, xxxiii. 2.

was built up of the same elements as our own. That we may apply some such explanation to Justin Martyr's words may be inferred from the fact that elsewhere he attaches a simple memorial meaning to the Eucharist.<sup>1</sup>

Clement of Alexandria understood the words of institution allegorically. It is sufficient to quote one passage:—‘He blessed the wine, saying, Take, drink; this is my blood, blood of the vine: he allegorizes as a holy stream of good cheer the Logos, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins.’<sup>2</sup> So Origen explains, in a long passage ‘about the typical and symbolical body,’ that the mere material of the bread which had been sanctified by the word of God and prayer had no spiritual effect, but the word pronounced over it was what benefited him who did not eat unworthily, but partook of it with a pure mind and conscience.<sup>3</sup> In another passage he says expressly, ‘For God the Word did not call that visible bread, which he held in his hands, his body, but the word in whose mystery that bread had to be broken. Nor did he call that visible drink his blood, but the word in whose mystery that drink had to be poured out. For what else can the body or blood of God the Word be, except the word which nourishes, and the word which rejoices the heart?’<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Περὶ τοῦ ἄρτου, ὃν παρέδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ ἡμέτερος Χριστὸς ποιεῖν εἰς ἀνάμνησιν τοῦ τε σωματοποιήσασθαι αὐτὸν διὰ τοὺς πιστεύοντας εἰς αὐτόν, δι’ οὓς καὶ παθητὸς γέγονε, καὶ περὶ τοῦ ποτηρίου, ὃ εἰς ἀνάμνησιν τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ παρέδωκεν εὐχαριστοῦντας ποιεῖν. *Dial.* § 70. Similarly § 41.

<sup>2</sup> Εὐλόγησέν γε τὸν οἶνον, εἰπὼν· Λάβετε, πίετε· τοῦτό μου ἐστὶν τὸ αἶμα, αἶμα τῆς ἀμπέλου· τὸν λόγον, τὸν περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχεόμενον εἰς ἄφεςιν ἁμαρτιῶν, εὐφροσύνης ἁγίου ἀλληγορεῖ νᾶμα. *Paedag.* II, 2, p. 186, Potter.

<sup>3</sup> *Com. in Matt.*, Tom. xi. 14.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Non enim panem illum visibilem, quem tenebat in manibus, corpus suum dicebat Deus Verbum, sed verbum, in cujus mysterio fuerat panis ille frangendus. Nec potum illum visibilem sanguinem suum dicebat, sed verbum, in cujus mysterio potus ille fuerat effundendus. Nam corpus Dei Verbi, aut sanguis, quid aliud esse potest, nisi verbum quod nutrit, et verbum quod laetificat cor?’ *In Matt. Com. Series* 85.



It may be sufficient to quote further the opinion of Pope Gelasius<sup>1</sup>:—‘Certainly the Sacraments, which we receive, of the body and blood of Christ are a Divine thing, for through the same we are made partakers of the Divine nature; and nevertheless it does not cease to be the substance or nature of bread and wine. And certainly the image and similitude of the body and blood of Christ are celebrated in the administration of the mysteries.’<sup>2</sup>

It is needless to follow the history further, or to enter, with some theologians, into a discussion of the question whether the body of our Lord could enter into the stomach of a dog or a pig or a mouse, or be thrown into a drain. Suffice it to say that, while the germs of the doctrine of transubstantiation date from a comparatively early period, it was not completely formulated and generally accepted before the age of Scholasticism. Details must be seen in histories of doctrine. What it concerns us at present to observe is that it is clear from the testimonies which have been adduced that the dogma does not rest on any uniform and universal tradition, but, like some other essentials of ecclesiastical theology, was slowly formed amid the general movements of thought and sentiment, and gradually superseded a simpler and more primitive doctrine.

The varieties of Protestant doctrine, which depart more or less completely from the Catholic dogma, must be studied

<sup>1</sup> Died A.D. 496.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Certe sacramenta, quae sumimus, corporis et sanguinis Christi, divina res est, propter quod et per eadem divinae efficimur participes naturae; et tamen esse non desinit substantia vel natura panis et vini. Et certe imago et similitudo corporis et sanguinis Christi in actione mysteriorum celebrantur.’ Quoted by Hagenbach, *History of Christian Doctrines*, ii. pp. 85 sq., from *Bibl. Max. PP.*, Tom. viii. p. 703.

The fact that in the earliest centuries the Christians had no altars and no material sacrifices seems to show that the later doctrine was then unknown. See the evidence relating to these points fully collected by Dr. Franz Wieland, *Mensa und Confessio. Studien über den Altar der altchristlichen Liturgie*. München, 1906.

in histories. They agree in rejecting transubstantiation and the adoration of the Host, and in extending the cup to the laity; and they range from Lutheran Consubstantiation, according to which the real body and blood are present in, under, and with the bread and wine, to the more spiritual, or, as some call it, the rationalistic and prosaic view, that the Lord's Supper is simply a symbolical and commemorative rite, and owes its efficacy to the appeal which it makes to the devout love and gratitude of the recipient. It is difficult to understand what remains in addition to the latter view after the rejection of the Catholic and Lutheran doctrines, though some Churches wrap the subject up in a cloud of words. Thus the Church of England declares 'that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.' The Article adds that 'the Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith.'<sup>1</sup> Here we are obviously dealing with figures of speech; but what is meant by eating the body of Christ in a spiritual manner is not explained, though its meaning is certainly not self-evident. Similarly the Westminster Confession says, 'Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporeally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then not corporeally or carnally in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.'<sup>2</sup> There is here all the appearance of great precision of language; but I must frankly confess that I am unable to attach any definite meaning to it beyond the purely

<sup>1</sup> Article 28.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter xxix. 7.



figurative one, that in the Lord's Supper we remember and dwell upon Christ's sufferings and death, and all that has resulted from them.

Let us now survey the subject for ourselves. It is generally assumed, even by impartial writers, that Christ formally instituted the Lord's Supper, as an ordinance to be observed for ever in his Church. If he had done so, he would have followed a practice common in ancient societies and cults. But the narratives of the event, when considered apart from subsequent practice, do not suggest anything of the kind. According to the Gospels Jesus was partaking of the Passover meal with his disciples, and asked them in future to break the Passover bread and drink the wine in remembrance of him, by whose death the new covenant would be ratified. But not a word is said about a new ordinance, or about his Church, or about successors of the Apostles, or about any sacramental effect. So far as Christ's own commandment is concerned, there is really nothing to rest upon. Nevertheless, it seems almost certain that the disciples had from the first a sacred meal, held far more frequently than once a year, in which they broke bread and drank wine in remembrance of Christ, and that this solemn act was associated especially with the memory of the closing scenes, his body broken and his blood shed upon the cross. This became quite naturally their bond of union, making them members of one spiritual body, whose head was Christ. It was a real act of fellowship, and, according to Oriental feeling, bound the disciples to one another in hallowed mutual obligations which have never lost their power of appeal to our western thought. That when devout feeling became less ardent, and more vulgar sentiments came into play, the sacred memorial act should be separated from the Agape, is only what we should expect; but the separation would tend to give a more mysterious meaning to the ritual, and prepare the way for the later sacramental view.

If this be a correct statement of the facts, it follows that



the observance of the Lord's Supper must be based, not on an express command of Christ's, but on the general practice of the Church, which quite legitimately gave a universal application to words which may originally have had a more limited intention. If indeed we would give to Christ's wishes the widest range, we ought to remember with him, whenever we break bread, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God; and thus the commonest meal should become a Sacrament sanctified by his spirit, and bringing nourishment to the soul as well as the body. But in addition to cherishing this prevailing spirit, which may maintain itself amid the depressing influences of the world, we seek for special times and places charged with holy associations, through which we may recruit our faltering strength, and revive our fading impressions of spiritual things. A very special opportunity for this religious exaltation is afforded by the Lord's Supper. That in spite of variations of doctrine it has been, like the Lord's Prayer, common to all ages and almost all sections of Christendom makes it a true communion with that universal Church which is the body of Christ, and with that one Spirit which has been the life-blood of all Christ's saintly followers. Thus its observance takes us away from our own narrow enclosures, and places us in that wide fellowship where the consecration of self-sacrifice rests upon every heart, and God is all in all. The first Communion, when the young soul openly takes upon itself the obligations of Christian faith, is deeply impressive, and may exercise a lasting influence upon the character; and the disuse of this ancient and solemn rite is the loss of precious means of strengthening the devout sentiments, and fortifying the soul against the world's temptations through the consciousness of a common life which has its source in God, and of membership in a world-wide community, whose head is Christ, and whose bond of brotherhood is the spirit of the Crucified.

The next Sacrament in the Catholic Church is *Poenitentia*,



which is generally translated 'Penance.' It is defined as the Sacrament 'whereby the benefit of Christ's death is applied to those who have lapsed after Baptism.'<sup>1</sup> Its historical basis is the record in St. John's Gospel that after the resurrection Christ breathed upon his disciples, saying, 'Receive the Holy Spirit; whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever ye retain, they are retained.'<sup>2</sup> It differs from Baptism, not only in matter and form, but in the fact that the administrator of Baptism ought not to be a judge, as the Church judges no one who has not first entered it through Baptism, whereas in Penance the Church must judge of the sins which have been committed so as to be able to liberate the penitent. Moreover those who are baptized obtain complete remission of all past sins, and are made a new creature in Christ, so that Baptism cannot be repeated, whereas in Penance men are absolved from particular sins as often as they are committed.

The form of this Sacrament consists of the words 'Ego te absolvo,' etc.; and its matter, of the acts of the penitent himself, namely Contrition, Confession, and Satisfaction.

Contrition is grief of mind and detestation of the sin committed, with the purpose of not sinning in future. This prepares for the remission of sins, when it is combined with confidence in the Divine mercy, and the intention of doing the other things which are requisite for the due completion of the Sacrament. This state of mind sometimes reconciles a man to God before the Sacrament is actually administered; but such reconciliation is not to be ascribed to the contrition itself apart from the intention of receiving the Sacrament. An imperfect contrition of this kind is called *Attritio*, and is a gift of God, and impulse of the Holy Spirit, moving the penitent to prepare the way to justification.

Confession is necessary because without it the priest could not exercise judgment upon the sins which have to be remitted. It follows that all mortal sins, so far as they

<sup>1</sup> Conc. Trid., Sessio xiv.

<sup>2</sup> John xx. 22, 23.



can be remembered, ought to be confessed, together with the circumstances which may affect the degree of their criminality ; but venial sins, though they may be rightly and usefully confessed, may be concealed without guilt. The distinction between mortal and venial sins is not very clearly defined. The former are those which completely alienate us from God ; the latter, the faults from which even good men are not exempt. Though sins may be publicly confessed, this is not required, and confession is usually made in secret before the priest alone. The power of absolution, known as the power or ministry of the keys, is limited to bishops and priests ; and their function is not merely declaratory, but is a judicial act, whereby sentence is pronounced. Absolution is not valid when pronounced by a priest on one over whom he has not ordinary or delegated jurisdiction. Very grave cases are reserved for the decision of the higher authorities. But there is no reservation when death is imminent, and then any priest may give complete absolution.

Satisfaction, the third part of Penance, is defined in general as the complete payment of something due, or as compensation for an injury inflicted on another, and, in the religious sense, as the compensation which a man pays to God for the sins which he has committed. Complete satisfaction for sin has been made by Christ alone, and apart from this the actions of men would have no value in the sight of God. The name ' Canonical satisfaction ' is applied to the punishments which are imposed by the Church upon penitents ; and even a punishment voluntarily undertaken, though it can be no part of the Sacrament, may be called satisfaction. Some have defined satisfaction as paying to God the honour which is due, and this involves a determination to avoid sin entirely, and to remove the causes of sin.

Absolution frees from the punishment of eternal death, but does not always release from the remnants of sin and temporal punishment. This distinction marks a difference



between Baptism and Penance. Sins committed before Baptism, being due to ignorance, are entirely remitted; but the case is much more serious when one knowingly grieves the Holy Spirit. The advantages of canonical satisfaction are the restraint which it imposes on the commission of sin, the satisfaction which it gives to the offended Church, and the instruction which it affords to others by the example of our penitence. Two things are necessary for true satisfaction: first, faith and love towards God; secondly, works which naturally cause some pain or trouble, though through the power of love the most bitter pain may be unfelt. The works of satisfaction are prayer, fasting, and alms-giving. Since we are all one body in Christ, it is possible for one to make satisfaction for another. This, however, has its limits: contrition and confession cannot be transferred, nor can the works which are prescribed for healing depraved affections be performed by another. In cases in which one has abstracted anything from the property or the reputation of another, the offender is not to be absolved unless he first promises to make restitution. The amount of the penalty is to be determined by justice, prudence, and piety.<sup>1</sup>

Such, then, is the Catholic doctrine of Penance, which has been so abundantly caricatured. It clearly possesses some admirable features; the Confessional is guarded from abuse by strict rules; and it is easy to believe that, when administered by faithful men amid a population which has not reached a very high level in the religious life, it may be productive of great good. But the historical foundation on which its claim to be a Sacrament is made to rest is of the feeblest character. The saying which is appealed to is recorded only in the Fourth Gospel, which, in the face of recent criticism, can hardly claim to be an infallible witness of matters of fact; and this remark will apply especially to sayings which are ascribed to the risen Christ. But if we accept the narrative as literally true, it says nothing of the

<sup>1</sup> For the above see *Conc. Trid.*, Sessio xiv. and *Cat. Rom.*, Pars ii. cap. v.

institution of a Sacrament, nothing of transmitting the power of the keys to the successors of the Apostles, and nothing of the sacerdotal character of those successors. But to my mind it is a more serious objection that the doctrine seems opposed to the whole spirit of primitive Christianity, which was a layman's religion, and largely a revolt against a priesthood, and a proclamation of the immediate communion of the soul with God. Here more than anywhere the Church intervenes, and puts itself in the place of God. In the parable of the prodigal son the offender makes his confession to his father alone, and is forgiven without any mediation. This represents the general tenor of Christ's teaching ; and nowhere is there the slightest hint that his disciples are to make confession to a newly instituted sacerdotal order. Men may no doubt help one another in the religious life, and confession to a brother may sometimes be desirable and beneficial ; but these things follow lines of their own which are traced by the Spirit of God, and the gifts of spiritual sympathy and wise counsel are not limited to a special and segregated class.

The fifth Sacrament is that of 'Extreme Unction,' known also as *Sacramentum unctionis infirmorum*, or *exeuntium*. The matter of this Sacrament is olive-oil consecrated by a bishop ; and this is applied to the several organs of sense, eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, and hands (as the principal organs of touch). The form is the prayer which the priest employs in the several anointings, saying, 'Per istam sanctam unctionem indulgeat tibi Deus, quidquid oculorum, sive narium, sive tactus vitio deliquisti,' though equivalent words are, and may be, used. This is the only Sacrament in which the form consists of prayer ; and prayer is employed because one object is that health may be restored to the sick, and this is not regularly accomplished by the force of the Sacrament which bestows a spiritual grace. It is applicable only to those who are seriously ill, and may not be administered even to those whose lives may be from any other cause in danger. It ought not to be postponed till the sick man has



lost consciousness or reason, for it is more profitable when it is religiously observed by the patient. Though it may be administered only once in the same illness, it may be repeated as often as a fresh attack places the life in danger. With a view to suitable preparation it ought to be preceded by the Sacrament of Penance and the Eucharist. It may be administered only by a priest, who must be the pastor possessing jurisdiction or some other person delegated by him. Its benefits are the remission of venial sins, liberation from the infirmity contracted by sin, the filling the mind with a sacred joy, arming the faithful to resist the power and artifice of the devil, and sometimes health of body. The last blessing so often fails because the faith either of the minister or of the recipient is too weak.

The scriptural authority for this Sacrament is found in James v. 14, 15, 'Is anyone sick among you? Let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, having anointed him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him, and if he have committed sins, he shall be forgiven.' That this passage should receive from Catholics the interpretation which it does is very natural; but, nevertheless, it labours under several disabilities. In the first place, the authorship of the Epistle is much disputed, and it was a considerable time before its authority was generally recognized in the Church. It may, however, be regarded in any case as an evidence of fairly early Christian practice. Secondly, there is nothing to prove that by 'the elders' is meant the single parish priest. Thirdly, according to our best historical information the elders in the primitive Church were not priests at all; and that the writer had no thought of a priesthood in his mind seems to be indicated by verse 16, 'Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed'; and it is added that the prayer, not of a priest, but of a righteous man, had great efficacy. And lastly, the chief blessing promised is healing,



and the forgiveness of sins is added in accordance with the belief of the time that sickness was due to sin ; but healing is the very result of the Sacrament which is confessedly most uncertain. A further difficulty in the way of the Catholic doctrine is this, that a Sacrament, in order to be such, must have been instituted by Christ. Now, as there is no historical evidence of this, it is necessary to derive history from the Sacrament, and not the Sacrament from history ; and so it is affirmed that, since Extreme Unction is a Sacrament, it was instituted by Christ. A feeble support is found in Mark vi. 13, where it is said that the twelve who had been sent out to preach 'anointed many sick persons with oil and healed them.' But even this semblance of Extreme Unction is not said to have rested on any command of Christ's. The Good Samaritan also used oil for healing wounds, and his conduct is expressly contrasted with that of a priest. Nevertheless, no one will deny that the solemn offices of religion may bring comfort and spiritual strength to the sick or dying ; but such effects do not depend on a prescribed form, nor are they the monopoly of an official class. The earnest prayer of the righteous man is what is needed. But where there is a stated ministry, it is the duty of the minister to visit the sick. In doing so, while he remembers the duty, let him think of himself only as a brother man, or rather let him altogether forget himself, and pray that he may go in pure sympathy and love, and he too, according to his sincerity, will be an instrument of grace, reviving the heart of the contrite, and bringing a Divine peace into the anguish of death.<sup>1</sup>

Ordination, the *Sacramentum ordinis*, is so called because it involves an orderly succession of ecclesiastical functions. For the highest grade, the priesthood, the most exalted claims are made. Bishops and priests act as interpreters of God and messengers between him and men, and bear upon

<sup>1</sup> See a useful note on 'anointing with oil' in *The Epistle of St. James, with an Introduction and Notes*, by Dr. R. J. Knowling, 1904, pp. 154 sqq.



earth the person (or character, *persona*) of God himself, and so are deservedly called not only angels, but even gods, because they hold among us the power and divinity of immortal God ; and though priests at all times have obtained supreme dignity, those of the New Testament far surpass all others in honour, for the power conferred upon them of making<sup>1</sup> and offering the body and blood of our Lord and remitting sins surpasses human intelligence, and nothing similar to it can be found upon earth.<sup>2</sup> This stupendous claim is made to rest on the sayings of Christ, already referred to, in John xx. 21-23, and Matthew xviii. 18, and on the doctrine of Christ's priesthood after the order of Melchizedek in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There are several orders, divided into major and minor. To the former belong priests, deacons, and subdeacons ; to the latter acolytes, exorcists, readers, and door-keepers. Together they constitute the clerical order, so called because they have the Lord as their lot and their inheritance. It is needless to dwell upon the ceremonies applicable to the various ranks, and we may confine our attention to the priesthood. Priesthood is distinguished as internal and external. Inwardly all the faithful are priests, for by faith they offer spiritual sacrifices to God on the altar of their mind. But Ordination belongs only to certain men who are appointed to a sacred ministry in the Church. These are sometimes called presbyters or elders, not only on account of the maturity of their age, but much more on account of the gravity and prudence of their manners ; and sometimes priests, *sacerdotes*, both because they are consecrated to God, and because it pertains to them to administer the Sacraments, and deal with sacred things. When a bishop appoints anyone a priest, he first, along with all the priests who are present, lays his hands upon him. He then places the stole upon his shoulders,

<sup>1</sup> 'Conficiendi.' Perhaps 'preparing,' or 'providing,' would be a better translation.

<sup>2</sup> *Cat. Rom.*, Pars II, cap. vii. § ii.



and arranges it in the form of a cross upon his breast. Afterwards he anoints his hands with sacred oil, and delivers the chalice with wine and the paten with the host, saying, 'Accipe potestatem offerendi sacrificium Deo, missasque celebrandi tam pro vivis, quam pro defunctis.' Finally, laying his hands again upon his head, he says, 'Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whose ye retain they are retained.' There are in the priesthood thus constituted five grades of dignity and power : first, those who are simply priests ; secondly, bishops ; thirdly, archbishops ; fourthly, patriarchs, attached in ancient times to Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem ; and lastly, the supreme Pontiff, the successor of Peter, and 'the true and legitimate vicar of Christ the Lord.' A bishop alone can initiate into the major orders ; but some abbots are allowed to administer minor orders. Bishops are consecrated by three bishops. Ordination impresses a permanent character, so that he who is once a priest cannot again become a layman.<sup>1</sup>

In the Church of England bishops and priests form two distinct orders, and in addition to these only deacons are recognized. The solemn and impressive services of ordination are not regarded as a Sacrament, although in the consecration of bishops the words of the archbishop seem to imply a kind of sacramental efficacy :—'Receive the Holy Ghost, for the Office and Work of a Bishop in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the Imposition of our hands. . . . And remember that thou stir up the grace of God which is given thee by this imposition of our hands.' Besides the archbishop (or some other bishop appointed by lawful commission) two other bishops must take part in the service. The direction about grace is not used in the ordering of priests and deacons ; but in the case of priests the charge to receive the holy Ghost is given, and significant words are added, 'Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven ;

<sup>1</sup> See Conc. Trid., Sessio xxiii. ; *Cat. Rom.*, Pars II, cap. vii.



and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.' A deacon simply receives authority to fulfil the duties of his office. He is obliged to answer a question to which it is extraordinary that educated men can now reply in the affirmative :—' Do you unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament ? '

The Presbyterian Church in Scotland recognizes Ordination only for the ' ministers of the gospel,' who may be pastors or teachers, or both united in one person, and who alone have authority to administer the Sacraments. Ordination is defined as ' the solemn setting apart of a person to some public church office,' and it is administered ' by imposition of hands, and prayer, with fasting, by these preaching presbyters to whom it doth belong.' Ordination in the Church of England is regarded as valid, so that one who has been ordained presbyter in that Church is to be admitted without any new ordination.

That ministers of the gospel should be chosen and appointed with due regard to their moral and intellectual qualifications, and should be dedicated to their work by some solemn and impressive form, few will be disposed to deny ; and any denomination suffers under a serious weakness which allows unsuitable men to thrust themselves into its ministry by playing on the caprice of some incautious congregation. This, however, is a matter of discipline, with which we are not immediately concerned. The doctrinal division is that between the sacramental theory, which claims a miraculous gift for a particular order of men, and the view that the Divine grace is not limited to any special channel of communication. In this respect the Church of England occupies rather an inconsistent position. It denies that Ordination is a Sacrament ; and yet, in the doctrine of apostolical succession, some of its spokesmen make claims which could not be surpassed by the Pope himself. Cranmer's Catechism, of 1548, says :—' The ministration of God's Word, which our Lord Jesus Christ did first institute, was



derived from the apostles unto others after them, by imposition of hands and giving the Holy Ghost, from the apostles' time to our days, and thus was the consecration, orders, and unction of the apostles, whereby they at the beginning made bishops and priests, and thus shall continue in the Church even to the world's end. Wherefore, good children, you shall steadfastly believe all those things which such ministers shall speak unto you from the mouth and by the commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ. And whatsoever they do to you, as when they baptize you, when they give you absolution, and distribute to you the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, these you shall so esteem as if Christ Himself in His own person did speak and minister unto you. For Christ hath commanded His ministers to do this unto you, and He Himself (although you see Him not with your bodily eyes) is present with His ministers and worketh by the Holy Ghost in the administration of His sacraments. And on the other hand, ye shall take good heed, and beware of false and privy preachers . . . For Christ is not present with such preachers, and therefore doth not the Holy Ghost work by their preaching.'<sup>1</sup> This is a stupendous claim, which seems entirely opposed to the world's facts. Even if it could be proved historically that there has been an unbroken succession of bishops from the time of the Apostles, there is no evidence that these bishops were guarded by a miraculous grace which belonged to no others. The bishops of the Catholic Church assert that many things are true, and rest on the authority of Christ, which bishops of the Anglican Church flatly deny. Bishops of the same Church do not always agree with one another. The gifts of the Spirit, if we are to judge by their manifestations, are not in fact confined to the selected order; and there is no discoverable difference in piety, learning, and usefulness between the ministers of the Episcopal and of the Non-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted with approval in *A Dictionary of the Church of England* by Rev. E. L. Cutts, p. 27.



conformist Churches. That there are men qualified by their spiritual gifts, their possession of the mind of Christ, and their devout insight into Divine things, to help their brethren on their upward way, and to bring them into a clearer consciousness of God's presence, is indeed true, and seems to be one of the providential means by which mankind climbs to higher altitudes; but the Spirit bloweth where it listeth, and has never been shut up within the folds of any visible organization. By the upholders of ecclesiastical theory Christ himself and his Apostles were scorned as having no authority to teach; and Christianity was a movement of the universal soul of man to assert its divine rights, and to deprive every privileged caste of its exclusive pretensions.<sup>1</sup>

The last of the seven Sacraments is Matrimony. The Catholic Church, while maintaining that celibacy is a better and more blessed state than marriage,<sup>2</sup> nevertheless ascribes to the latter a peculiar sanctity, and regards it as indissoluble except by death. In proof that the marriage contract is a Sacrament, appeal is made to Ephesians v. 32, where, after the reference to the union of man and wife, the Vulgate translates, '*Sacramentum hoc magnum est; ego autem dico in Christo et in ecclesia.*' The Catholic Dictionary, however, frankly points out that *Sacramentum* need not mean a 'Sacrament' any more than the Greek *μυστήριον* which it represents, and that in fact it cannot mean a Sacrament in any of the other fifteen places where it occurs. It is also allowed to be uncertain when Christ instituted the Sacrament. 'Some say at the wedding in Cana; others when He abrogated the liberty of divorce (Matt. xix.); others in the great Forty Days after Easter.' There is not, however, a particle of evidence that he instituted a Sacrament on any of these occasions. There has been some uncertainty also about the character of the Sacrament itself; but it is now laid down that the 'parties themselves are the ministers of the

<sup>1</sup> See the previous remarks on the Roman claim to apostolicity.

<sup>2</sup> Conc. Trid., Sessio xxiv. Canon x.



Sacrament ; the matter consists in the words or other signs by which each gives him or herself over to the other ; the form, which gives a determinate character to the matter, consists in the acceptation of this surrender by each of the contracting parties.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, people are expected to be married in Church, and to receive the blessing of a priest.

Whether marriage be regarded as a Sacrament or not, every one imbued with the Christian spirit will fully sympathize with the Catholic Church in attaching an inviolable sanctity to the marriage bond.<sup>2</sup> Whatever laxity secular governments may think it prudent to allow, facility of divorce is only a concession to men's hardness of heart ; and it is a matter for inquiry whether it does not tend to degrade the whole conception of marriage, and to foster the very evils which it is intended to alleviate. Whatever we may call it, the love which subsists in Christian marriage is a heavenly gift, which bears the Divine signet seal, and testifies to its own eternity ; and it will be a sad thing if the selfish savagery, or the wild animal passion, which sometimes dares to usurp the holy name of love, succeeds in expelling the sanctity of this union, and lowering it into a mere earthly contract. And so we close this review of the Catholic Sacraments, finding ourselves in fullest harmony with the Church's aspiration for a Divine grace to rest upon all the great occasions of human life ; only we cannot confine this Divine grace to ecclesiastical channels, but believe that every soul may place itself under the bountiful hand of God, and through self-surrender receive the grace and truth which are needed for its guidance, and that every man who seeks in prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit may pass on some Divine blessing to his brethren.

<sup>1</sup> Addis and Arnold, *Catholic Dictionary*, p. 547.

<sup>2</sup> Coleridge declares that it 'is perfectly a sacramental ordinance,' but not retained as a Sacrament at the Reformation, because it is not distinctive of the Church of Christ, and not of universal obligation. *Aids to Reflection*, ed. 1866, p. 29.



## CHAPTER VII

### RISE AND PROGRESS OF RELIGION IN THE INDIVIDUAL

FROM the consideration of institutions which aid the development or the expression of the Divine life in man we must pass on to a subject which, perhaps more than any other, bristles with controversy, namely, the growth and effect of religion in the individual and in society.

In viewing the rise and progress of religion in the individual several subjects present themselves for discussion. These may be arranged in a chronological order, beginning with the purpose of God, and ending with the ultimate destiny of man.

#### I. Predestination

The doctrine which treats of the eternal purpose of God is known as the doctrine of Predestination, a word derived from the Vulgate *praedestinavit*, by which, in Romans viii. 29 and 30, the Greek *προώρισεν* is rendered. All who believe in God and Providence must necessarily assume that there was a Divine purpose in the creation of man, and that the progressive development of the race must tend towards the realization of some great idea. We have already seen that, so far as we are concerned, we may regard the manifestation of the sons of God as the ultimate goal towards which the world is moving; and accordingly St. Paul declares that 'whom he foreknew he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be first-born among

many brothers.'<sup>1</sup> In some such inchoate form the doctrine remained through the early centuries, and it was not allowed to interfere with a belief in the freedom of the will and individual responsibility. It was not till the time of Augustine and the Pelagian controversy that thought on this subject began to present itself in those definite and startling conclusions which have perplexed the minds of men through so many generations. Even Augustine, in his early revolt from Manicheism, declared that nothing but its own sins could injure any nature, that there was no natural evil, that sin could not be rightly imputed to anyone but the man committing the sin, and that, if he had not the power of resisting the cause of his volition, he yielded to it without sin.<sup>2</sup> At a later time, under the stress of the Pelagian controversy, he formulated a doctrine which, though never ratified by the Catholic Church, influenced the thoughts of men for centuries, appeared as a rigid dogma among the Reformers, and, though gradually yielding to a more Christian view, has cast its dark shadow even into the present age. It seemed to him that the doctrine of Pelagius was essentially shallow, and opposed not only to the testimony of Scripture but to the facts of the spiritual life; and the repulsion which he felt from what he deemed to be error drove him into a position which was opposed to the conscience of mankind.

In order to understand the Protestant dogmas of Predestination we must observe the roots out of which they grew. The spiritual roots are (1) a profound sense of sin, as a hostile power that thwarts, and even renders impotent, the human will, which, in the strong language of Paul, is 'sold under sin';<sup>3</sup> (2) an overwhelming sense of the supremacy of God, and of the nothingness of man before his

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 29.

<sup>2</sup> See the passages quoted by Hagenbach, *History of Doctrines*, I, p. 418, from *De Gen. contra Manich.* ii. 43 (c. 29), and *De lib. Arb.* iii. 50 (c. 17, 18).

<sup>3</sup> Rom. vii. 14.



infinite power and holiness ; (3) an experience of having been rescued, and translated into a kingdom of light, and purity, and love, not by the exercise of the will, but through a Divine influence taking the soul captive, and filling it with the unutterable peace of filial communion. In connexion with these inward experiences Augustine assumed certain external facts which seemed to agree with or to explain them. Adam fell through voluntary disobedience, and thereby not only he himself, but all his posterity, passed into a state of slavery, so that, if left to itself, the whole world would be damned, and every man, by being a child of Adam, incurred the doom of eternal hell. Any deliverance, therefore, was a pure act of grace ; and accordingly God predestined a certain fixed number to be saved, and these he elected, while he left the rest to their merited fate.<sup>1</sup> The elect were sons of God before they were born, and could not perish.<sup>2</sup>

The doctrine in its extremest form, involving reprobation as well as election, was worked out by Calvin with logical precision and completeness.<sup>3</sup> In this form it appears in

<sup>1</sup> Augustine does not hesitate to apply the word Predestination to both classes of men :—‘ duas societates hominum, quarum est una quae praedestinata est in aeternum regnare cum Deo, altera aeternum supplicium subire cum diabolo ’ (*De Civ.* xv. 1). The predestination, however, refers to punishment, not to sin. It is assumed that the whole mass of mankind *deserves* eternal punishment, from which the elect are saved by grace.

<sup>2</sup> See numerous passages cited in Hagenbach.

<sup>3</sup> ‘ Praedestinationem, qua Deus alios in spem vitae adoptat, alios adjudicat aeternae morti.’ ‘ Non enim pari conditione creantur omnes : sed aliis vita aeterna, aliis damnatio aeterna praeordinatur ’ (*Institutio* III, xxi. 5). ‘ Ipsa electio nisi reprobationi opposita non staret ’ (xxiii. 1). ‘ Quos ergo Deus praeterit, reprobatur : neque alia de causa nisi quod ab haereditate quam filiis suis praedestinat, illos vult excludere ’ (xxiii. 1). The predestination applies to the original fall : ‘ Dico, Deum non modo primi hominis casum, et in eo posterorum ruinam praevidisse, sed arbitrio quoque suo dispensasse.’ But even Calvin’s hard logic was not without a moment’s shrinking, ‘ Decretum quidem horribile, fateor ’ (xxiii. 7). He defends the justice of this by making the Divine will the supreme and unconditioned cause : ‘ Adeo enim summa est justitiae regula Dei voluntas, ut quicquid



several of the Confessions. It is sufficient for our purpose to quote the Westminster Confession, where it is stated with unmistakable clearness:—‘Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions; yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions. . . . Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace. . . . The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.’<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of the Church of England, as set forth in the seventeenth Article, seems to imply the same view; but it carefully avoids an explicit reference to reprobation, and it adds a caution that ‘we must receive God’s promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy Scripture.’ His overwhelming sense of the Divine supremacy and causality drove Luther into extravagant, and what might seem irreverent, expressions. In his book *De servo Arbitrio* he maintains that God is the moving agent in everything, even in Satan and the impious, and that his prescience, since it cannot be mistaken, differs nothing from absolute predestination.<sup>2</sup> Melanchthon, in his earlier period,

vult, eo ipso quod vult, justum habendum sit’ (xxiii. 2). But while the Divine judgment which assigns men to damnation is just, it is incomprehensible (xxi. 7).

<sup>1</sup> Chapter III.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Grimm, *Instit. Theol.*, p. 392, note 4.



accepted the full consequences of this position. He maintained that since all things which happen happen necessarily according to Divine predestination, there is no freedom of our will.<sup>1</sup> Further reflection, however, compelled him to abandon such sophistical 'ravings about Stoical fate'; and the Lutherans generally assumed a position by which, if not very consistently, they sought to avoid the horrors of the Calvinistic creed. Accordingly the Formula of Concord lays down the following doctrine:—First of all, the distinction between prescience and predestination must be carefully observed. The foreknowledge of God extends to everything, and applies equally to the pious and the wicked; but it is no cause of sin, which proceeds originally from the Devil and the perverted will of man; nor is it the cause of men's perdition, which they ought to impute to themselves. Predestination, the eternal election of God, applies only to the pious children of God, and is a cause of their salvation, which is thereby firmly secured. This has been revealed in the Word of God, which leads us to Christ. Christ calls all sinners to himself, and earnestly desires that all men should come to him, and allow him to help them. Hence we must not judge of our election in such a way as to fall either into an Epicurean life or into despair: we must not say, If I am elected to salvation, I cannot be damned do what I will, or, on the other hand, if I am not elected it is useless to do any good. For God has included

<sup>1</sup> 'Constanter credere, quod a Deo fiant omnia . . . . Omnia necessario evenire scripturae docent . . . . voluntati nostrae libertatem, per predestinationis necessitatem adimit scriptura.' *Loci*, 1521, *Corpus Reformationum*, xxi. p. 89. In the edition of 1535 he is more guarded. 'Est autem haec pia et vera sententia, . . . . quod Deus non sit causa peccati, et quod Deus non velit peccatum. Sed causae peccati sunt voluntas Diaboli et voluntas hominis . . . . Plane sequitur contingentiam concedendam esse.' *Ibid.* p. 371. 'Nec invehenda sunt in Ecclesiam deliramenta de Stoico fato aut περὶ τῆς ἀνάγκης. Nihil enim habent veri aut firmi,' etc., pp. 372 sq. 'Valla et plerique alii non recte detrahunt voluntati hominis libertatem ideo, quia fiant omnia decernente Deo.' p. 373.



all in unbelief that he may have mercy upon all, and he does not will that any should perish, but that every one should be converted and believe in Christ. The saying, 'many are called, but few chosen,' does not imply that God is unwilling to make every one blessed; but the cause is that either they do not hear the Word of God at all, but despise it, and prevent the Holy Spirit from working in them, or, when they have heard, let it vanish unregarded. The doctrines are expressly rejected, that God does not wish all men to repent, and believe; that, when he calls us to himself, it is not his earnest desire that all men should come to him; that God ordains men to damnation from his own mere will, without regard to their sin; that the cause of God's election is not only his compassion and the merit of Christ, but also something in ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

We may notice, then, the following contrasted opinions:—God wished all men to be saved; he wished some to be saved. The efficacy of the atonement extended to the whole world; it extended only to the elect. Predestination depended on prevision, and applied only to the elect, while all others perished through their own fault; it depended solely on the will of God, and therefore applied equally to the elect and the reprobate. Reprobation applied only to Adam's posterity, Adam's own fall being contingent (sub- or infra-lapsarianism); Adam's fall was itself predestined (supralapsarianism).

The scriptural support of the doctrine, or rather doctrines, of predestination is found mainly in a few passages in the Pauline Epistles, and especially in the great argument in the ninth chapter of Romans. It is impossible here to enter at length into an exposition of that difficult chapter; but a few general observations may be made. First of all, Paul represents predestination as conditioned by foreknowledge:— 'Whom he foreknew he also predestinated.'<sup>2</sup> He does not

<sup>1</sup> *Epitome*, Art. xi., pp. 617 sqq. All this is explained at greater length in the *Solida Declaratio*, Art. xi.

<sup>2</sup> Rcm. viii. 29.



enter into particulars ; but the reference to foreknowledge seems clearly to imply some condition on the human side, without which the predestined end would not be reached.<sup>1</sup> Whether it is possible to have foreknowledge of contingent events is of course open to discussion ; but God's absolute foreknowledge has been frequently assumed without any intention of denying the freedom of the will. Even among men some analogy to Paul's thought may be found. You may know beforehand the quality of a man's intellect and the steadfastness of his character, and in consequence of this knowledge you may elect him out of the crowd, and predestine him to a position of trust and honour. This corresponds with Paul's idea of predestination, which is always to something great and good. It is so in the verse just referred to :—‘ He predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.’ Again he speaks of a ‘ hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages unto our glory.’<sup>2</sup> And again in Ephesians we read that God ‘ elected us before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him, having in love predestined us unto the adoption of sons through Jesus Christ unto himself.’<sup>3</sup> If we may venture to express these thoughts more generally, we may say that there are certain stages of spiritual elevation to which God in his love is leading mankind, and that from time

<sup>1</sup> That foreknowledge was recognized as not identical with, but as the ground of predestination is shown very clearly by a passage in Clement of Alexandria—ἐκκλησίαν . . . συνάγουσαν τοὺς ἤδη κατατεταγμένους, οὓς προώρισεν ὁ Θεὸς, δικαίους ἐσομένους πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου ἐγνωκώς (*Strom.* vii. 17, p. 900, Potter). I owe the reference to Wegscheider, *Institutiones theologiae Christianae dogmaticae*, 1833, p. 517. I find, however, that I had already made a note of it. The Greek Church retains this view :—πιστεύομεν τὸν ἄκρως ἀγαθὸν Θεὸν ἐξ αἰδίου οὓς ἐξελέξατο εἰς δόξαν προορίσαι, οὓς δ' αὖ ἀπεδοκίμασεν εἰς κατάκρισιν παραχωρήσαι . . . ὅτι τούτους μὲν προεῖδεν καλῶς τῷ αὐτεξουσίῳ χρησομένους, τούτους δὲ κακῶς, προορίσαι ἢ κατακρίναι. (Ὁμολογία Δοσιθέου, Ὅρος 3). The whole passage is very explicit, and directed against παμμιάρους αἵρετικούς, but is too long to quote in full.

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. ii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. i. 4, 5.



to time he elects, according to his own good pleasure, those whom he may send as representatives and heralds of the new life. The deep life of sonship, the glorious revelations that flashed into his soul, were not created by Paul's will, but came to him as a Divine call, and sent him forth to subdue the heathen world to the obedience of Christ. And yet he felt that if his will relaxed its efforts, he, the mighty preacher, with his visions and revelations, might become a castaway. And so it always is. Our ideal is not of our own creation, but comes to us with a heavenly choice and summons, and we imperfectly follow according to the measure of our faithfulness. Thus the end towards which mankind is moving is predestined ; and the time when this end shall be clearly revealed to a few longing hearts, and the degree in which it shall be apprehended by individual souls, are governed, not by human choice, but by God's predetermined law. Nevertheless, the moral problem never disappears. Its precise character indeed varies indefinitely, and cannot be the same for the coarse and ignorant as it is for the cultured and refined. But each man has to be faithful to that which he has seen and known, and has the strange power of disobeying the heavenly voice, and refusing to follow whither God would lead. Accordingly not only Biblical writers in general, but Paul himself no less than others, constantly exhort men to be true to their professions, and to live in conformity with the Divine will. In the very chapters where the Apostle unfolds his doctrine of predestination the Gentiles are warned that they will not be spared if they do not remain in the goodness which has been extended towards them ;<sup>1</sup> and in Ephesians, after the glowing account of the predestined sonship, the readers are admonished to walk worthily of the vocation wherewith they were called.<sup>2</sup> Luther set aside the obvious significance of such passages by maintaining that they were only intended to lead men to a knowledge of their impotence, in the same

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 13 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 1.



way as parents play with their children, bidding them to come, or to do this or that, only that it may appear how unable they are to do it, and how they are compelled to call to their aid the parent's hand<sup>1</sup>—surely one of the most singular instances of wresting the Scriptures that the history of exegesis affords.

But what are we to say to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart? Did not Paul, through this example, clearly teach the doctrine of reprobation? It is impossible here to attempt a full exegesis of that remarkable passage; but a few observations may soften or remove the difficulty. In the first place Paul's whole teaching assumes human responsibility, and the obligation resting upon men, and therefore their ability, to be faithful to their privileges. It follows that, if this passage was intended to bear the meaning which is usually put upon it, it is a very one-sided declaration, into which Paul was led for the moment by the course of his argument. But, secondly, grave doubts may be raised whether the passage is rightly interpreted. It seems evidently assumed that Pharaoh was guilty of resisting the Divine command. Hardness of heart refers, not to moral depravity, but to obstinacy, and blindness of judgment; so that the hardening is a judicial act, preparing the king for his merited doom. In the application of this example to Israel it is assumed that the hardening is quite temporary, and is governed by a beneficent purpose. The blindness of Israel made Christianity a universal religion; and when the Gentiles were gathered in, all Israel should be saved. Thus the kindness and the severity of God alike tended to universal salvation; 'for God shut up all into disobedience that he might have pity upon all.'<sup>2</sup>

The same universality in the Divine purpose is expressed in I Timothy ii. 4, 'God wishes all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth.' This seems entirely opposed to the opinion that any men are predestinated to

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Grimm, p. 392, note 4.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xi. 32.



be lost, or that they are left in a perdition from which they have no power to escape. Augustine, however, evaded its plain meaning by limiting 'all' to the predestinated, or by referring it to individuals of every class and condition.<sup>1</sup> Thus what was originally a gospel, glad tidings of great joy, for mankind, proclaiming the universality of Divine love, has been changed by theologians into a doctrine of damnation and despair, and they have derived a feeble and selfish comfort from the belief that they themselves and a few others have been arbitrarily pulled out of the general wreck. But the Christian doctrine of predestination proclaims that the loving providence of God is slowly working out a sublime purpose for our race, and has 'great hopes,' not only for 'great souls,' but for the weary and heavy-laden, for the down-trodden and the outcast, for those who have striven with sin and found it too masterful, for those to whom Divine truth is but a glimmer in a dark place. There is many a mystery which may fill our hearts with shame and our eyes with tears ; but yet we trust that over all is a purpose of good which never falters, and that 'sin and death shall not prevail.'<sup>2</sup>

Closely connected with this doctrine of predestination is the question whether there is any salvation for those who are entirely outside the Christian religion. Augustine expressed the negative view which necessarily resulted from his doctrine that Christianity was a method of rescuing a certain number out of the universe of the damned. He admitted, however, that there would be gradations in the punishments. Fabricius, he said, would be punished less than Catiline, not because the former was good, but because the latter was worse ; and Fabricius was less impious than

<sup>1</sup> See Grimm, p. 391, note 2 ; Hagenbach I, p. 431, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> Schleiermacher, among others, believed that grace would be extended ultimately to all, if not in this world, then in the next, and that whether it came a little sooner or a little later was a point of subordinate importance (*Der christliche Glaube*, §§ 117 sqq).



Catiline, not by the possession of real virtues, but by not deviating so widely from real virtues ;<sup>1</sup> and the lightest damnation would be the lot of unbaptized infants who had not added to original sin any transgressions of their own.<sup>2</sup> The Reformers necessarily embraced this doctrine in all its repulsive harshness ; but we must in justice to them observe that it was founded on the sense of spiritual deliverance which they had themselves experienced. Thus Luther's Larger Catechism remarks that we could never have come to the recognition of the Father's grace without Christ, the mirror of the Father's heart, without whom we see nothing but an angry and terrible Judge ; and of Christ we could know nothing if it were not revealed through the Holy Spirit. Consequently these articles of the faith, the Catechism continues, separate us Christians from all other men upon earth. All that are outside Christianity, be it heathens, Turks, Jews, or false Christians and hypocrites, though they may believe in and adore only one true God, nevertheless remain in eternal wrath and damnation, for they have not the Lord Christ, and are not enlightened through the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> The Westminster Confession speaks with its usual explicitness :—‘ Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved : much less can men not professing the Christian religion be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess ; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious and to be detested.’<sup>4</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Contra Julian.* iv. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* v. 11. See also *Enchiridion* xciii. ‘ Mitissima sane omnium poena erit eorum, qui praeter peccatum, quod originale traxerunt, nullum insuper addiderunt, et in ceteris, qui addiderunt, tanto quisque tolerabiliorem ibi habebit damnationem, quanto hic minorem habuit iniquitatem.’

<sup>3</sup> Part II, Article iii., p. 503.

<sup>4</sup> Chap. X, § iv. See also the Larger Catechism, Question 60.



Church of England, where damnation is involved, is equally free from ambiguity :—‘ They also are to be had accursed that presume to say, That every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he profeseth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that Law, and the light of Nature. For holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.’<sup>1</sup>

It may seem to us strange that such sentiments could be held by men who were in any degree imbued with the Christian spirit ; but they may perhaps be traced to three principal sources, a consideration of which will make them appear less extraordinary. First, there is a natural tendency, under the influence of strong religious emotion, to suppose that that emotion has lifted us above the ordinary experience of mankind, and that the way in which we ourselves were raised into a higher spiritual life is the only way by which communion with God can be attained. Thus, apart from any real arrogance, which, however, is too apt to steal in, a deep and novel religious experience begets exclusiveness ; and it requires a wide and sympathetic acquaintance with men to teach us that the calmer life of multitudes rests upon genuine faith, and that God has many ways of appealing to the souls of his children. Again, we are all too much governed by the unconscious assumption that God really is what men think that he is. Thus we are prone to speak of the atheist as if he had no God, and of those who deny the Divine Fatherhood as if they had no heavenly Father. But supposing it to be true that Christ alone has revealed the Father’s heart, and that all who are not Christians think of God only as an angry and terrible Judge, it does not follow that he *is* an angry and terrible Judge, but, on the contrary, that that is a mistaken view, and that even the children of darkness are dear to the Father’s heart, and, though they know it not, are led by his loving hand. And lastly, this narrowness of view was much more excusable when the non-Christian

<sup>1</sup> Article xviii.



world occupied a far smaller place in Christian thought than is possible at the present day. Time and space have broken their bounds. Hebrews and Greeks and Romans have become a small and modern portion of the world's inhabitants, and we must go back through teeming ages, and behold mighty civilizations which flourished long before Rome rested on its seven hills, or Athens became the queen of literature and thought, or Abraham left his kindred in answer to a Divine call. Are we to suppose that through all these thousands of years God abandoned his children, and that nothing but sin reigned on the earth, that temples rose, and worship was offered, and laws were enacted, and great communities held together in mutual helpfulness and service, all under the administration of the Devil? Human history is, no doubt, a chequered scene, full of painful episodes; but if Christ has indeed revealed the Father's heart, then assuredly his providential care was guiding the vast movement, and leading men by a gradual progress to higher things. A similar change of view has taken place in regard to the contemporary world. Christendom no longer fills so vast a place in our eyes, for increased facilities of communication have made distant nations far more real to us; and closer intercourse has taught us that they also have their moral ideals and their religious faith, which tell them of nobler things than they have yet attained. The barriers are slowly breaking down, and we are beginning to perceive that the Holy Spirit of God has a world-wide empire, and has been slowly preparing men for that universal brotherhood which was dear to the heart of Christ.

It cannot be maintained that the exclusive claims of Christianity are without support in the New Testament. Verses may be quoted which appear to give it a decisive sanction. Peter, in addressing the Sanhedrin, and speaking of the miraculous effect of the name of Jesus, says, 'There is no salvation in any other; for neither is there any other name under heaven given among men in which we must be



saved.’<sup>1</sup> The fourth Evangelist writes, ‘He that believes on the Son has eternal life; but he that disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him.’<sup>2</sup> And again we read in the first Epistle of John, ‘He that has the Son has life: he that has not the Son of God has not life’: ‘We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the evil one.’<sup>3</sup> The remarks already made are applicable to the feelings expressed in such words. But we must further consider the circumstances of the time. It was inevitable that the disciples of Jesus, conscious as they were of a new life within themselves, and filled with a pure enthusiasm, should have regarded Christianity as the one only means of redeeming the Roman empire, which was practically their world, from its moral corruption. We know from the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans how foul was the appearance which Gentile society presented to a pure and lofty mind like Paul’s. And now it seemed that God’s own love had come down into the seething mass of pollution, and was appealing to men to come out of the dark abodes of sin into the light of heaven, and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Christ’s was the one only life that made men one with God. A great crisis had come upon the world, winnowing men, and gathering some into a brotherhood consecrated to righteousness, while others refused to hear, and remained exposed to that destruction which waits upon all guilt. This mode of viewing the relation between the new and the old was greatly strengthened by the Messianic expectation. The first generation of disciples confidently expected Jesus soon to return, and establish the kingdom of the Messiah. That world-wide kingdom was to gather in all who would be saved; and those who chose to remain outside would meet their merited doom, and perish in their sins. Thus the exclusiveness, which to a philosophical onlooker may appear a blemish in primitive Christianity, arose inevitably out of the circumstances of the time, and was

<sup>1</sup> Acts iv. 12.<sup>2</sup> John iii. 36.<sup>3</sup> I John v. 12, 19.



aggravated by a view of the providential order which history has proved to be delusive ; and it does not follow that this narrowness of conception belongs to the essence of the religion. Let us turn for a moment to the teaching of Christ himself.

That Jesus had a profound sense of his Divine call to proclaim and introduce a new spiritual kingdom cannot, I think, be reasonably doubted ; and even the Synoptics represent him as having a consciousness of God's fatherhood, and a power of revealing it to others, which were peculiar to himself.<sup>1</sup> This profound consciousness may explain the saying ascribed to him by the fourth Evangelist, 'No man comes to the Father but through me';<sup>2</sup> for, according to the same disciple, he felt himself in such intimate union with God, and in such absolute dependence upon him, that his words and deeds were a direct expression of the Father's will, and it is only through the same absolute self-surrender to perfect love that any man can become conscious that he is in the Father, and the Father in him. But while Jesus asks for a complete trust, and a love which will never be ashamed of him, his principles of judgment are universal. He declares, 'Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he that doeth the will of my Father'; men shall be known by their fruits, and it is the workers of iniquity that must depart from him.<sup>3</sup> When the rich young man asked Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life, Jesus simply referred him to the commandments.<sup>4</sup> In the figurative description of the future judgment everything is made to depend on deeds of sympathy and love.<sup>5</sup> Christ's brother and sister and mother are those who do the will of his Father.<sup>6</sup> The Samaritan, that is, the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 25-27 ; Luke x. 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. vii. 20-23. Compare Luke vi. 45, 46.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xix. 16 sqq. ; Mark x. 17 sqq. ; Luke xviii. 18 sqq.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xxv. 31 sqq.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. xii. 50 ; Mark iii. 35 ; Luke viii. 21.

alien and the heretic, is our neighbour when he forgets himself in an act of mercy ; and this is said to illustrate the declaration that he who loves God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself, shall live.<sup>1</sup> The prodigal son is driven simply by the misery of his own sin to seek his father's house, and, coming with none to plead for him, is received with overflowing joy.<sup>2</sup> Even in the model prayer, designed for the use of his own disciples, there is no mention of himself. All this is characteristic, and although theologians who love to reduce Christ to their own petty level may explain it away, its meaning is perfectly clear, and it conducts us to principles of judgment of world-wide application. Goodness in a Gentile is the same as goodness in a Christian ; to say that good is evil is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit ; those everywhere whose rule of life is the will of God are accepted of him ; and Christ's spiritual kingdom is not coincident with Christendom, but is partly within, and partly outside of it. Thus it appears that the narrowness and exclusiveness of Christianity do not belong to its essence, but are in reality a departure from the principles of its Founder.

## 2. Grace

If men were predestined to some high rank in the spiritual world, then some provision must have been made to secure the attainment of that end. We have already spoken of the outward 'means of grace' ; and now we must turn to the doctrine of grace itself. The whole Christian movement is so constantly ascribed to the unmerited love of God that it is needless to refer to particular passages. Indeed, the gospel was essentially a proclamation that God loved the world, and wished all men to be saved, and to live as his children. But certain questions inevitably arise : What is man's relation to the means of grace ? How does it act, and what does it effect ? To these questions different answers may be given. It may be said that grace consists simply in

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 25 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xv. 11 sqq.



the provision of external aids which the free will of man may accept or reject ; or it may be maintained, on the contrary, that grace is the action of the Holy Spirit within the heart, predisposing or even compelling it to turn to God in love and obedience, and that apart from this supernatural influence the will must remain powerless for good. These conflicting views of Pelagius and Augustine correspond with two types of mind, which, I suppose, always exist, and which, necessarily guided by the interpretation of their own consciousness, diverge widely from one another in their spiritual psychology. There are happily constituted natures to whom a virtuous life is easy, who are not haunted by visions of an unattainable holiness, and who consequently have no harrowing sense of sin and impotence, and are never torn by the fierceness of inward strife. But there are deeper and more passionate natures, who send their glance far above the ordinary moral law, and seek for perfect inward communion with the holiness of God ; who have wrestled in agony with sin, and been defeated ; and who have finally found rest through simple surrender to the mystic touch of Divine love and peace amid their warring impulses. It may be that these profounder souls are subject to an exceptional experience ; and yet that experience may give them a truer insight into our spiritual relations, and, when guarded against one-sided exaggeration, may represent truly the hidden life of ordinary men.

The extreme views which present themselves on both sides arise from the difficulty of harmonizing grace and free will. The reality of both is guaranteed by Christian experience. Many a quiet soul, which has not the fervour of Paul or Augustine, is nevertheless conscious of aspirations after goodness, and of devout impulses towards life in God, which are not the creation of the will, but, coming spontaneously, reveal themselves as a Divine call to holiness ; and sometimes this call is so clear and strong, so full of visions and revelations, that the whole principle of life is changed, and the man feels

himself lifted into a higher realm of spiritual being without any effort on his own part. Thus grace seems to act by laws of its own, and to take no account of the human will. Nevertheless, within the Christian consciousness, the sense of responsibility, and the conviction of the reality of sin and ill-desert, are no less deep and permanent, and there is no legitimacy in these if the will has no power of free determination towards good or evil. It is probable that the majority of good men have these two experiences, and are not troubled by any apparent contrariety between them ; but as soon as you come to formulate a doctrine, difficulties occur, and while one is so overwhelmed by his assurance of Divine grace that he sacrifices responsibility in its honour, another is so impressed by the voice of duty and the sense of responsibility which it evokes, that he minimizes the action of grace.

The controversy which sprang from these apparently discordant facts played a conspicuous part at the time of the Reformation, so that we may reasonably assign the first place to a statement of the Lutheran dogma. The first reformers were deeply impressed by what seemed the natural alienation of the mind from God, by requirements in the Divine law which no human power was competent to fulfil, and by the impotence of all the good works prescribed by ecclesiastical authority to bring peace of mind. But peace had come to them by quite a different method. In listening to the Scriptures as the Word of God a glowing faith in Christ had been kindled in their hearts, and that faith had given them for the first time an assurance of God's love and forgiveness, and awakened that pure devotion to the higher Will which their own willing and running had failed to attain. This experience must have confirmed in their minds the doctrine of original sin ; and in its turn that doctrine must have cast a dark shade over their experience. It is assumed that the natural state of man is one of sin and damnation, from which a certain number are to be saved : the question is, how is salvation effected ? In his long and admirable article



on grace, or, to give it its proper title, 'On love and the fulfilling of the law,'<sup>1</sup> Melanchthon appeals to the general consciousness as a sufficient proof of the futility of works. Those who think that they are to earn eternal life by their works can have no peace of heart or conscience in the hour of death, and can never be certain whether God is gracious ; for they can never know whether they have done works enough, or have satisfied the law. Rather, they will feel that they are guilty before the law, and cannot rightly love or serve God ; and such hearts and consciences are very hell, full of doubt, despair, and hatred, and the highest saint would have no security against the power of the Devil, the horror of death, and the anguish of hell, if he had not the assurance of the gospel that he should attain eternal life out of pure grace.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly the fundamental Lutheran dogma on this point relates to the impotence of the human will. It is admitted that man has free will to live outwardly in a respectable way, to choose among ordinary things, and even, from its inborn light, without the Holy Spirit, to do external works of the law ; but without grace and the help and operation of the Holy Spirit man cannot please God, for the reason is blind in spiritual things, and the unregenerate will is not only turned away from God, but is God's enemy, and has pleasure only in evil, and therefore no one is able, without the Holy Spirit, to turn the whole heart to God, as the first table of the law and the first and great commandment require.<sup>3</sup> It is apparent from this statement that it is the power rather than the freedom of the will which is denied. Freedom to choose between alternatives is granted, and even the power of doing such good works as society may exact

<sup>1</sup> *Apology for the Augsburg Confession*, Article iii.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 128 sqq. I follow the German. The German translation was made by Justus Jonas, but contains additions and alterations proceeding from Melanchthon himself (see J. T. Müller's edition 1860, p. lxxxiii.).

<sup>3</sup> *Augsburg Conf.*, Article xviii. ; *Apol.*, pp. 84, 93 ; *Formula of Concord*, *Epitome*, Art. ii. ; *Solida Declaratio*, Art. ii., pp. 655 sqq.

is not denied. But the whole spiritual realm is unknown, and the higher religious motives never present themselves. It might, however, be contended that, when once the Divine light is given, a man's salvation depends upon his faithful observance of the moral law, and that by such observance he earns eternal life. This suggestion is met by maintaining the continued imperfection of the will. Even those who are new-born through faith and the Holy Spirit never become entirely pure, or perfectly observe the law, in the present life ; and no one can truly boast that he loves God as the law requires,<sup>1</sup> that he loves his neighbour as himself, is free from all evil desires, and never murmurs against God.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly it is an error to suppose that Christ has earned for us only the *prima gratia*, and that afterwards we must deserve eternal life by our own works. In that case there would be no peace for the heart and conscience either in the hour of death or at any other time, and we could never be certain whether God was gracious or not. Consequently this doctrine could lead only to uninterrupted anguish of heart, and finally to despair.<sup>3</sup> Hence man is dependent from beginning to end upon grace alone for his salvation. He can deserve nothing but God's wrath ; but for the sake of Christ, the only Mediator, God is gracious, and imparts the gift of faith and the Holy Spirit, through which the man who receives it is assured of eternal life. Good works, which are required by God, necessarily follow as an expression of the life of grace, but not as means of procuring the favour of God.

So far the doctrine of the will is not very clearly defined. The question inevitably arises : has the will any part at all in effecting the regenerate life ? It is said that ' Many are called, but few chosen ' : how is it that some respond to the call, and others not ? The reply given by the Formula of

<sup>1</sup> *Apol.*, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> *Apology*, Art. iii., p. 91 ; *Form. Conc.*, *Sol. Dec.*, Art. ii., p. 675.

<sup>3</sup> *Apol.*, pp. 90, 95, 128.



Concord, which has been already quoted, is that the cause of failure resides in men themselves : either they do not hear God's Word, which is truly the organ of the Holy Spirit, through which he is really efficacious and works in our hearts, but close their ears and their heart, and so block the way of the Holy Spirit that he cannot have his work in them, or, when they have heard it, they throw it again to the wind, so that not God or his choice, but their own evil is in fault.<sup>1</sup> This certainly seems to throw upon the will the decision to accept or reject the proffered grace ; and agreeably to this view Melanchthon, in 1535, taught that there were three concurrent causes, 'the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the human will assenting to and not resisting the Word of God.'<sup>2</sup> This 'synergistic' opinion, which seems so plainly taught in the passage just cited from the Formula of Concord, is emphatically condemned by the same authority ; and it is maintained that the will has no natural power whatever of assisting or co-operating in the reception of grace, but grace comes solely through the operation of the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> If we attempt to combine the two views of the Formula, we may say that in some men the will surrenders itself passively to the efficacy of grace, while in others it offers an active opposition. But if this alternative remains within the power of the will, then the ultimate result depends after all upon voluntary choice ; and if, to escape this conclusion, it is said that in the elect grace works with overmastering force, while in others it is too feeble to produce regeneration, then human responsibility vanishes, and it is really the withholding of grace that sends man to his doom.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Epitome*, Art. xi., Affirmativa § 11, p. 619 ; *Sol. Dec.*, Art. ii., p. 672.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Grimm, p. 404.

<sup>3</sup> *Sol. Dec.*, Art. ii., pp. 672 sq., 677 sq.

<sup>4</sup> The mental process has been carefully analysed, from the point of view of a psychologist, by Dr. Edwin Diller Starbuck in his instructive work, 'The Psychology of Religion. An Empirical Study of the Growth of Religious Consciousness,' 1899. In regard to the exercise of the will he says, 'At the crisis in conversion, no matter whether or not the will has been

The more logical school of Calvin accepted the latter doctrine, and the Synod of Dort expressly taught that God bent the will of man infallibly to faith and conversion, and that man could not resist, so as to prevent his own regeneration.<sup>1</sup>

The Catholic dogma differs from the Protestant mainly in the clear recognition of human responsibility, and consequently of the co-operation of the human will in the work of salvation. It starts from the same fundamental doctrine, that through the fall men are by nature the children of wrath and slaves of sin, but with this qualification, that their free will is by no means destroyed, although it is weakened. God therefore sent his Son to be a propitiator for the sins of the whole world. But though Christ died for all, not all receive the benefit of his death; for men must be reborn in Christ, and by that rebirth through the merit of his passion grace is bestowed upon them. The transference into a state of grace, however, cannot, after the promulgation of the gospel, be effected without the laver of regeneration. The beginning of justification, then, is derived, in the case of adults, from the prevenient grace of God, coming through Jesus Christ; that is, from his call, whereby, in the absence of all merits of their own, they are called, so that through his

*definitely exercised, it is an important step toward spiritual regeneration that the personal will be given up. . . . We have in the foregoing only half the picture of the effect of the will. . . . It appears that the will is not valueless in the process of conversion, as we were about to conclude, but, on the contrary, it may be of the first importance. After the person has striven in the direction of the new life, it would seem that it then tends to come of itself. "God helps them who help themselves." It may be that the effort expended is one direct cause of the otherwise unaccountable awakening.'* p. 99. The italics are the author's.

<sup>1</sup> *Canones Synodi Dordrechtanae*, Cap. III, IV, § xii. (in Niemeyer, *Collectio Conf. in Ec. Ref.*). The important words are: 'neutiquam fit . . . ut . . . in hominum potestate maneat regenerari vel non regenerari, converti vel non converti . . . adeo ut . . . certo, infallibiliter et efficaciter regenerentur.' But this is not inconsistent with remnants of sin, and temptations, which must be sedulously guarded against.



exciting and assisting grace they are disposed to turn themselves to their own justification by freely assenting to and co-operating with that same grace. Accordingly, while God touches the heart of man through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, neither is man entirely inactive in receiving that inspiration, inasmuch as he can cast it from him, nor without the grace of God can he by his own free will move himself to righteousness. But men are disposed towards righteousness while, with the assistance of Divine grace, conceiving faith from hearing, they move freely towards God, believing that the things are true which have been divinely revealed and promised; and hence they begin to love God, and to feel that penitence for sin which they ought to have before baptism; and finally they resolve to receive baptism, and begin a new life. Thus man receives renewal through a voluntary acceptance of the grace and gifts whereby from being unrighteous he becomes righteous. Owing to free will grace may be lost; and for the same reason man has power, in a state of grace, to observe the commandments of God, at least with the exception of trivial and venial faults, and, if he persevere to the end, he has a right to expect an eternal reward for his good works in accordance with God's own promise. But no man should trust or boast in himself, and not in the Lord, whose kindness towards all men is so great that he wishes those things to be *their* merits which are really his own gifts.<sup>1</sup>

In comparing the Catholic with the Protestant view it seems to me that the former is the truer in its spiritual psychology, and cannot be denied without the complete rejection of human responsibility, and, in strictness of reasoning, making God the author of sin and perdition. This conclusion the Protestants, of course, would not admit; but it appears to follow inevitably from their premises. Both views are marked by the narrowness and exclusiveness which, as we have seen, were inevitable at the time. It

<sup>1</sup> Council of Trent, Session vi.

was axiomatic that the world, apart from Christianity and the atonement effected by Christ's death, was irretrievably lost; and on both sides, accordingly, it was assumed that Christians were the sole possessors of Divine grace. The doctrine that Christ atoned for the sins of the whole world, and that the offer of grace was universal, which was maintained alike by Catholics and Lutherans,<sup>1</sup> opens the way to a wider prospect. It was assumed that the gospel had been proclaimed through all nations, and every one had the opportunity of accepting the proffered salvation. We now know how ill-founded was this comforting supposition, and that, if salvation has no existence outside of Christianity, the vast majority of the human race has sunk into bottomless perdition. The limitation which is attended with this horrible result is due to the narrowness of human knowledge and perception, and it is quite inconsistent with the great Christian principles that God loves the world, that he will have all men to be saved, that he has made all men of one blood, and that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him. In accordance with these great sayings, which signified the breaking down of Jewish exclusiveness, we must break down the exclusiveness of Christendom, and universalize the doctrine of grace. God has never left himself without a witness, but his grace has wrought, in various measures and by various methods, in the hearts of his children in all lands and in all ages. To say that outside of Christianity men have never loved God, or aspired after his holiness, or sought to do his will is to say what we now know to be untrue. Such love and aspiration and effort have been a response to the inworking of Divine grace. The initiative is always with God; for, without exaggerating the weakness of the human will, we must see

<sup>1</sup> For the doctrine of the latter see the *Formula of Concord*, Sol. Dec., Art. xi., p. 804, 'Firmissime . . . retinendum est, quod non tantum prædicatio poenitentiae, verum etiam promissio evangelii sit universalis, h. e. ad omnes homines pertineat.' See also *Epitome*, Art. xi., Affirmativa § 7.



clearly that the will cannot create new emotions, or open the blind eyes of the soul to see unimagined visions. These come, and claim us with a heavenly authority, and we imperfectly follow whither duty leads. Hence it is quite true that eternal life is purely the gift of God, and it cannot be earned in the sense of placing God under any obligations to us by our good works ; and, nevertheless, the gift may be imparted upon certain moral conditions which we may voluntarily fulfil or disregard. The notion of irresistible grace is, indeed, probably founded on a genuine experience. Not only are spiritual gifts obviously bestowed in very different measures, and it is impossible to believe that Christ and Nero could have changed places, but there are times when the soul seems transported into a higher region, where the breath of pure emotion fills it with a new life, and the power of the will seems to be suspended, and to lie passive in the hand of God. But even then the warning is needed, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'<sup>1</sup> The overwhelming emotion will pass away, and a time of depression and weariness will come, when our faithfulness is tested, and the will must take up its appointed task. Hence it is possible to fall from grace, and, denying the voice of the Spirit, to turn once more to an earthly and selfish life. But if in its earnest efforts to be true to the heavenly vision the will sometimes fails, then we can rest in the full assurance of God's pardoning love, which visits us, neither for our own poor merits nor for the extraordinary merits of another, but from its own overflowing abundance. God's eternal nature is love ; and it has neither been created nor purchased by Christianity ; and if Christianity has proclaimed it with a depth and power of appeal which belong to no other religion, it has proclaimed it as a universal truth, and broken the barriers which seemed to confine the grace of God within arbitrary limits. It is the glory of genuine Christianity that it does not raise a partition wall to exclude the mass of

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. x. 12.



men from the kingdom of heaven, but reveals the great spiritual laws which, whether men acknowledge them or not, encircle the world.

### 3. Conversion

The order in which the effects of grace manifest themselves, or the order of salvation as it has been technically called, has been described with great precision by theologians ; but we need not follow them in all their minute and somewhat pedantic divisions. The first obvious effect is conversion, the turning of the affections and purposes to God and his righteousness. This turning implies a previous 'call,' whether external or only internal, and 'illumination,' or a new or more vivid perception of the reality of spiritual things. The operative call is properly inward, a consciousness of a Divine attraction, a voice in the sanctuary of the soul summoning one to a nobler life. It is probable that it generally comes on the occasion of some striking event : it may be the actual invitation of the Christian preacher, as he proclaims the sanctity of God's moral law and the beseeching of Divine love ; or it may be indirectly, through the words of a book, or a saintly example, or some incident that drives us to serious reflection, or possibly from a multitude of gentle influences which evade our scrutiny. There is no single method by which God finds the hearts of his children ; and the assumption, so natural to one who has undergone a momentous change, that all must conform to one fixed pattern, and pass through precisely the same experiences, is sometimes productive of great mischief, inducing despondency, and consequent callousness, because the feelings will not run into the accepted mould.

Conversion, according to Melanchthon, who represents, I think, the ordinary evangelical doctrine, contains two parts, contrition and faith, to which may be added the worthy fruits of penitence, a change of life for the better.<sup>1</sup> Contrition

<sup>1</sup> In the Latin this division refers only to *poenitentia* ; but that this is equivalent to conversion is shown by the German, *Buss oder Bekehrung*.



consists of the terrors of conscience, which feels that God is angry with sin, and which grieves that it has sinned. Human nature could not sustain this horrible wrath of God, unless it were supported by the Word of God. Hence the need of the subsequent faith<sup>1</sup> that sins are freely forgiven for Christ's sake. This faith strives against sin, and is followed by love.<sup>2</sup>

That the foregoing describes truly one process of conversion no one can doubt who reads Melancthon's earnest words, which are evidently the utterance of deep conviction, the result of his own experience. First come, as with Paul, the threatenings of the law, and the horror of an awakened and terrified conscience; and then the gospel steps in with its offer of grace, and heals the wounds which the law has inflicted. But conversion may come simply through the gospel. The sense of sin may be awakened, not only by the stern demands and curses of the law, but by the vision of the Divine and blessed life in Christ, and of the love of God which he taught and manifested. In this case there is no terror, but pure, unselfish grief that we have slighted the heavenly love, and that, while the Father's holy compassion has been close to us all our lives, seeking and saving, we, through our pride and self-will, have been too blind to see, too deaf to hear it. And surely it was so when Christ was on the earth. It was not by stormy threatenings, but by his holy love and sympathy, and his deep sorrow for the weakness and the sins of men, that he touched the heart, and drew the wayward will into submissive trust and devotion. Thus faith does not step in to assuage the previous terror of a guilty conscience, but is from first to last the operative principle, which draws the soul to God, and thereby awakens a calm and holy sorrow for past evil, and an earnest resolve to live henceforth in loving obedience to the Divine will.

<sup>1</sup> That faith *follows* is expressly said, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> *Apology*, Art. v., pp. 165 sqq.

Two questions have often been raised in regard to conversion : is it universally required ? and can it come suddenly ? Those who believe that children are born in a state of moral equilibrium can see no need for conversion except in the case of those who have wilfully given themselves to a life of sin. Those, on the other hand, who believe in the ruin of human nature must regard conversion as a prime necessity for every one who is to be saved from the general doom. In accordance with our doctrine of sin we may take an intermediate position. It is universally true that, unless a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God ; but whether this spiritual birth always involves conversion may perhaps be questioned. We do not regard the dawning of the intellectual powers as a conversion from the mere sensory instincts of the infant ; and so the spiritual awakening may come, not with convulsions and tremors, but as the slow unfolding of the normal life. Certainly there are men of heavenly mind who have no recollection of any such crisis as conversion, but seem to themselves to have had heaven around them from their childhood, and to have heard the pleadings of a Divine voice from their earliest years. There are also good and faithful men who have never reached the higher levels of spiritual life, and whose judgments of spiritual things are shallow and imperfect. To such men a change might come, withdrawing, as it were, a veil from the eye of the soul, and producing a revolution in their modes of thought ; but to men of this type conversion seldom comes, and they cannot be reckoned among the religious heroes and inspirers of the world. God, however, distributes of his Spirit to every man severally as he will ; and we cannot doubt that these men of simple life, so faithful to the light which has been granted them, are fulfilling their appointed work in the kingdom of heaven, and in the great assize will not be condemned because the storms of conversion have never disturbed the tranquillity of their souls.

Whether conversion can be sudden or not depends on the



extent of meaning which we assign to the term. If, regarding it chiefly from the outside, we make it include a complete change in natural temperament and acquired habit, it is likely to occupy a considerable time, though instances might be quoted to show that a change even of this far-reaching character can take place suddenly. But, properly speaking, outward reformation is a consequence, and might be a very slow consequence of conversion; the conversion itself is a change in the inward principle and purpose of life, an awakening of heart and conscience to the apprehension of God's love and the requirements of his righteousness. This alteration in the sentiments, consequent on a new spiritual perception, and resulting in a dedication of the life to the higher Will, may be sudden, and often can be dated from a particular moment; and, nevertheless, a long time may elapse before the new spiritual energy has reduced the old impulses to complete obedience, and made the visible life a pure expression of the hidden ideals of the soul. But while conversion may be, we cannot affirm that it must be, sudden. It may come gradually through the experiences of life and the exercise of thought, and it may be only after the lapse of years that one who has been indifferent or scornful towards religion is able to say that his view is completely changed, and he has become conscious of a diviner life than he formerly recognized. God has many ways of finding the soul, and we must not deny or despise the enlightenment and faith which have come in a different way from our own.

#### 4. Justification

Closely connected with conversion is justification. These are indeed different aspects of the same experience: conversion denoting the change in the affections and will; justification the change in our relations with God, which is coincident with the change in the inward springs of life. The doctrine of justification attempts to answer the question, what is it that makes us righteous in the sight of God, and



places us in the condition in which our sins are forgiven, and the conscience is at peace with God? It brings before us the oft debated question of the relation between faith and works. The difference of view upon these points raised the most fundamental controversy between Catholics and Protestants. The dividing line has been already traced, but, though it involves some repetition, must be viewed once more under this particular aspect. The Reformers, having found in their experience that ecclesiastical prescriptions brought no peace of conscience,<sup>1</sup> had recourse to the principle of faith, which had been awakened in their minds through the study of Holy Scripture; and, accordingly, they laid down the following doctrine of justification:—men obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness in the sight of God, not through their own merit or work, but solely from grace, for Christ's sake, through faith; and this faith is counted for righteousness. It must be carefully observed that faith is regarded purely as the receptive organ, through which man appropriates the proffered justification, and not as a quality on account of which he is justified. In order that men may obtain faith God has instituted the preacher's office, and given the gospel and the sacraments, as means through which he confers the Holy Spirit, who works faith in those who hear the gospel, when and where he will. So it is stated in Article v. of the Augsburg Confession; but in Article xx. it is stated that the Holy Spirit is given through faith, so that we seem to be involved in a vicious circle. The difficulty is by no means cleared up in Melanchthon's Apology. He says that through faith the Holy Spirit comes into our heart,<sup>2</sup> and, even more strongly, that it is through faith alone that we receive the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> This certainly seems to make faith the prior condition of every spiritual grace. But if this were so, the whole process of salvation, so far as the individual is concerned, would begin upon the human side, and the Protestant doctrine would be cut away at the root.

<sup>1</sup> *Augsburg Conf.*, Art. xx.

<sup>2</sup> p. 68.

<sup>3</sup> p. 76.



Accordingly Melanchthon says elsewhere that faith is a mighty work of the Holy Spirit;<sup>1</sup> and the Formula of Concord declares that the Holy Spirit not only kindles faith and other virtues, but alone opens the understanding and heart to understand the Scripture and give heed to the Word.<sup>2</sup> This represents the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart as prior, in thought at least, if not in time, to the operation of faith. But so little is Melanchthon conscious of this difficulty that he combines the two statements in one short paragraph. Faith, he says, is a new light in the heart, a mighty work of the Holy Spirit, whereby we become new-born; and because faith alone obtains the forgiveness of sin, and makes us acceptable to God, it brings with it the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> However we may try to reconcile these statements, it is clear that faith is regarded as purely a gift,<sup>4</sup> and in no way dependent upon the will; for such dependence would turn it into a work, and make voluntary human agency a condition of justification. It is important to notice the character of 'special' or saving faith. It is carefully distinguished from mere belief in the historical facts of Christ's suffering and resurrection, such as the devils may have. It implies a warm confidence in God, which accepts his grace and the forgiveness of sins. Accordingly, faith is not opposed to good works, but requires them, not indeed in order to deserve grace, but as fruits which are produced for the sake of God, and to his glory.<sup>5</sup>

Melanchthon's exposition does not sustain the extreme Protestant view of imputed righteousness. In defining *justificari* he says that it is used in two senses, namely, to be

<sup>1</sup> p. 79. So it stands in the German, 'ein stark kräftig Werk des heiligen Geistes, das die Herzen verändert.' The Latin is different, 'fides . . . non est otiosa notitia, sed res, accipiens Spiritum Sanctum et iustificans nos.'

<sup>2</sup> *Sol. Dec.*, pp. 662 sq.

<sup>3</sup> p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> It is expressly so called in the *Formula of Concord: Epitome*, Art. iii., Affirmativa 4; *Sol. Dec.*, p. 684.

<sup>5</sup> See *Aug. Conf.*, Articles iv., v., vi., xx.



converted or new-born and to be considered righteous;<sup>1</sup> and he proposes to show first that we are converted from our godless nature, new-born, and become righteous through faith alone.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, further on he declares that to be justified means, from being a sinner to become pious, and to be new-born through the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> In agreement with this view he distinguishes the righteousness which comes from faith in Christ from the inferior righteousness of the law.<sup>4</sup> Both are a service of God. But whereas the righteousness of the law is a service in which we offer our works to God, faith is a service in which we allow gifts to be bestowed upon us; for faith is not our own doing or giving, but a perfect trust that God bestows gifts on us, and not we on him.<sup>5</sup> This trust in God's compassion is praised in Scripture as the greatest and holiest service of God.<sup>6</sup>

The Formula of Concord, while professedly agreeing with Melancthon, apparently presents a different view from his. It declares that the word 'justify' means to absolve, that is, to pronounce free from sins, and formally condemns as an error the thesis that 'in the sayings of Prophets and Apostles, where the righteousness of faith is treated of, the words "to justify" and "to be justified" do not signify to absolve from sins and to obtain remission of sins, but to be made really and truly righteous on account of love infused through the Holy Spirit, and the virtues and works which flow from thence.'<sup>7</sup> As this does not coincide with the language of the

<sup>1</sup> So in the German: in the Latin, 'iustificari significat ex iniustis iustos effici seu regenerari; significat et iustos pronuntiari seu reputari.'

<sup>2</sup> So in the German, 'dass wir allein durch den Glauben aus dem gottlosen Wesen bekehrt, neu geboren und gerecht werden.' The Latin is different, 'quod sola fides ex iniusto iustum efficiat, hoc est, accipiat remissionem peccatorum.' Further on, in quoting Rom. v. 1, he accepts the second meaning, 'iustificare vero hoc loco forensi consuetudine significat reum absolvere et pronuntiare iustum' (p. 125, in the Latin only).

<sup>3</sup> p. 74. The Latin is slightly different.

<sup>4</sup> p. 67.

<sup>5</sup> p. 69. The German is fuller than the Latin.

<sup>6</sup> p. 70.

<sup>7</sup> *Sol. Dec.*, Art. iii., p. 697.



Apology, it is explained that there the words *regeneratio* and *vivificatio* are used as synonymous with justification, though elsewhere they denote the renewal of man, and are distinct from justification. The plea is put forward that the substitution of these words is not wholly improper, because justification is truly a regeneration in this sense, that from being a child of wrath one is established as a child of God. To the article on justification properly belong only the grace of God, the merit of Christ, the faith whereby Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, and we consequently obtain forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, sonship, and the inheritance of eternal life. Even in this statement, however, the justification is not represented as purely objective; for it is expressly said that there is no true saving faith in those who are without repentance and sorrow, and have an evil purpose of remaining in sin.<sup>1</sup> This certainly seems to imply either that the human will exercises some activity in the reception of faith or that the bestowal of faith includes an infusion of real righteousness. But the latter member of the alternative might be accepted without any contradiction; for it is not said that men are justified on account of their faith, but only that faith is the instrument whereby justification is appropriated. The exclusion of human desert as the ground, or any part of the ground, of acceptance with God is rigidly maintained. Faith makes righteous, not because it is a good work and beautiful virtue, but because it appropriates the merit of Christ; and the righteousness which is imputed to faith is the obedience, suffering, and resurrection of Christ, who has satisfied the law for us, and paid for our sins.<sup>2</sup> The suggestion that men are justified partly through the new obedience which has begun is expressly condemned.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever real or apparent difference there is between the Apology and the Formula of Concord, they agree in the essential point of their opposition to Catholic teaching.

<sup>1</sup> *Epit.*, p. 585; *Sol. Dec.*, pp. 686 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 684 sq.

<sup>3</sup> *Epit.*, Art. iii., *Negativa* 9.



They reject with equal decisiveness the two kinds of merit technically known as *meritum de congruo* and *meritum de condigno*.<sup>1</sup> Of these the former is prior to justification, and relates to voluntary actions which, in union with the merit of Christ, make it congruous or fitting that God should confer a benefit; the latter is subsequent to justification, and belongs to those who, not without Divine assistance, deserve salvation on account of their love and good works. Thus, according to Lutheran dogma, man can neither contribute anything towards his justification, nor, after he has been justified, can he do anything to entitle him to salvation. Scripture, however, speaks of a reward in heaven. This may be explained in two ways. No good works can entitle us to eternal life; but that life, when once given, may be a compensation or reward for our sufferings and works of love. And further, good works are really meritorious, not in the sense of deserving the forgiveness of sin, but in making men worthy of other gifts, which are bestowed in and after the gift of eternal life, so that every man will be rewarded according to his works, and some have higher distinction than others.<sup>2</sup>

The Calvinistic view of imputed righteousness is presented with its usual unmistakable clearness in the Westminster Confession:—‘Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone: not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to them as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith: which faith they have not of themselves; it is the gift of God. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification;

<sup>1</sup> *Apol.*, pp. 63, 72, 87, 127, 133, 135.

<sup>2</sup> *Apol.*, pp. 135 sqq.



yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that in this view justification is the first step in the religious life ; that prior to justification man is lost in sin ; and that he can do nothing whatever to obtain justification. It is easy to understand how this doctrine might seem to be a true interpretation of spiritual experience. To certain men, in the creative epochs of religious history, it appears as though a diviner life came and took possession of them without any effort on their own part, and the beginning of this life was faith, a high confidence in the nearness and love of God, producing an inward power, of which good works were the natural fruit. And such men, absorbed in the contemplation of the Divine holiness and its requirements, can see nothing in themselves but ill-desert, and therefore can ascribe their peace of mind, and the whole of their life in God, solely to the grace which had pity on them, and chose to justify the ungodly by imputing to them a righteousness which they did not possess. If this experience were universal, it would not raise any very serious difficulty ; but it is so far from universal that we have to explain not only the goodness of the saint, but the wickedness of the depraved. Under this doctrine human responsibility vanishes, and sin becomes merely a disease. If men are lost, they are lost because a faith, which they cannot of themselves obtain, has never been given to them. And so this difficulty constantly recurs, and God, by withholding the faith which alone can appropriate the proffered grace, is made the real cause of all the world's iniquity.

The Catholic doctrine is perhaps sufficiently apparent from what has already been stated about grace and free will ; but the following points may be emphasized. Grace is not the favour whereby a righteousness which they do not possess is imputed to men, but is that whereby they are made

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xi. 1, 2.



righteous.<sup>1</sup> Instead of denying, with the Protestants, all human agency in justification, the Catholic insists that, though the grace is prevenient, it bears fruit only through the free co-operation of the will. It is not till men are thus prepared through penitence and a determination to begin a new life that justification takes place. Accordingly, an anathema is pronounced against those who say that all works which are done before justification, with whatever reason they are done, are truly sins, or deserve the hatred of God, or that the more vehemently anyone strives to dispose himself towards grace, the more grievously he sins. Justification, which comes only after the soul has been prepared for its reception, is defined as not only the remission of sins, but also sanctification, a renewal of the inward man through a voluntary acceptance of the grace and gifts whereby man, from being unrighteous, becomes righteous, and from an enemy, a friend. The causes of justification are the following :— The final cause is the glory of God and Christ, and eternal life ; the efficient, the merciful God, who freely sanctifies, and seals with the Holy Spirit of promise ; the meritorious, the most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who earned our justification by his passion on the cross, and satisfied God the Father for us ; the instrumental, the Sacrament of Baptism, which is the Sacrament of that faith without which no one obtains justification ; and finally, the formal cause is the righteousness of God, not that whereby he himself is righteous, but that wherewith he makes us righteous, and we are not only reputed to be, but are truly called and are righteous, receiving righteousness in ourselves, every one according to his measure, which the Holy Spirit imparts to men severally as he will, and according to each one's own disposition and co-operation. For, although no one can be righteous unless the merits of Christ's passion are communicated to him, nevertheless, by the merit of that passion the love of God is diffused, through the Holy Spirit, in the

<sup>1</sup> ' *Qua justi fiunt.* '



hearts of those who are justified, so that along with the remission of sins man receives, through Jesus Christ, faith, hope, and love. For faith, without hope and love, cannot make a man a living member of Christ's body. Hence it is truly said that faith without works is dead ; and it is only faith which works through love that can secure eternal life. Men are said to be justified by faith because faith is the beginning and foundation of human salvation, the root of all justification ; and they are justified freely (*gratis*) because none of the things which precede justification, whether faith or works, deserves the grace of justification. Thus, in opposition to Protestantism, justification is represented as contingent, and those are censured for their vain and impious confidence who are certain of their own justification, and maintain that no one is justified who has not this unhesitating belief, as though one who had not this belief doubted about the promises of God and the efficacy of Christ's death and resurrection. But though no one ought to doubt about the compassion of God, the merit of Christ, or the efficacy of the Sacraments, nevertheless, regarding his own infirmity and indisposition, one may have fears respecting one's own grace. Therefore they that stand should take heed lest they fall, and should work out their salvation with fear and trembling, in labours, in vigils, in alms, in prayers and offerings, in fasts and chastity. Those who through sin have fallen from the grace of justification can be again justified through the Sacrament of Penance.<sup>1</sup>

In comparing these contrasted doctrines we may notice first the distinction which the Protestant draws between justification and sanctification, a distinction which is rejected by the Catholic, who makes the former include the latter. This is partly a difference in the use of terms, but not wholly so. The Protestant, rejecting all human conditions of acceptance with God, regards justification as a forensic acquittal, a merciful judgment of God that is not according to truth,

<sup>1</sup> Council of Trent, Session vi.



an imputation of righteousness that has no existence. Justification, therefore, is the initial process, a taking of man into favour while he is still sunk in sin ; and sanctification comes later, after a man has through faith received the justification. The Catholic rejects wholly this doctrine of legal fiction, and, believing that God's judgment must be according to truth, maintains that some preparation on man's side must precede the remission of sins, and that this must be accompanied by the infusion of real goodness. The strong point on the Protestant side is the assertion of the impotence of external works to merit or procure the favour of God. Obedience to a law for the sake of our own safety is not righteousness, but at the best a discreet selfishness. Accordingly, as it is impossible for man to change his inward nature, and lift himself to unknown levels of thought and sentiment, there is no resource unless God take him unconditionally into favour, and attribute to him a righteousness which he is far from possessing. But here, after all, comes in a human condition, not indeed as a meritorious claim, but as a receptive organ. It is laid down, on both sides of the controversy, that faith is essential. For a man cannot come to God unless he believe that God is willing to receive and to forgive him. The prodigal would never have returned to his father's home if he had expected nothing but blows and curses. But this faith in God's forgiving love, and confident resting in his grace, in itself implies a spiritual revolution of the most momentous kind. It surely makes a world of difference whether a man is on the side of God, feeling himself folded in Divine Love, and earnest to live in conformity with the Divine will, or is opposed to God, rebelling against his will, and viewing him as a cruel and inexorable Judge.<sup>1</sup> Now, if a man have the former faith, it requires no make-believe to

<sup>1</sup> This is clearly recognized by Melanchthon, who says that faith makes righteous and brings life, and that the comfort which it imparts is a new birth and a new life (*Apol.*, p. 71, in the German), and cannot coexist with deadly sin (*Apol.*, p. 71).



justify him, in the sense of receiving and forgiving him, as the father received his repentant and returning prodigal. Nevertheless this great spiritual upheaval does not imply the finished righteousness of a saintly child of God. The scars of sin, the imperious behests of evil habit, may long remain ; and therefore justification, in the Protestant sense, may be sudden and complete, while sanctification is slow, and perhaps never completed on this side of the grave.

On the subject of the will sufficient may have been already said. The Catholic doctrine is, I think, both truer psychologically and more conducive to a holy life. It is the province of the will to accept or to reject, to be faithful or unfaithful ; and though the belief that they were simple instruments in the hand of God has, in exciting times, filled men with courage and enthusiasm, and made them equal to vast enterprise and heroic suffering, I think that in quiet times and with ordinary men the conviction that all human effort was futile, and that we could do nothing but wait for an irresistible grace, would have a depressing and demoralizing effect. It is surely a good and strengthening thought that while we must depend upon God for every good and perfect gift, it is for us to receive or to reject it ; that within certain limits, we are arbiters of our own destiny ; and that we shall reap as we have sown.

To one question neither doctrine gives any satisfying answer : why do some men believe, and others not ? This is a great mystery. If God be the Father, whose essential attribute is love, why does he hide himself from so many ? The Calvinist does not shrink from the answer which follows logically from the whole Protestant position : God chooses that the vast majority should be damned for the glory of his justice. That is an answer which it is impossible to accept, even if we can give no other. We must refer it to the Divine will, acting, no doubt, in the plenitude of love, however dark it may seem to our eyes, that one man has this gift, and another that, that some walk upon the luminous heights of



heavenly glory, some upon the dusty plain of common duties and dull affections, and others in the gloomy valleys where no Divine ray seems to penetrate. But may we not say that for wise and holy purposes there is a long gradation of souls, which places them in relations of mutual dependence and helpfulness ; that spiritual gifts are bestowed, not only for the sake of the recipient, but that they may be communicated to the world ; that the waiting, and the hope, and the strife against sin and on behalf of the kingdom of God, are a strengthening discipline in the education of our race ; and that every man will finally be judged according to his opportunities and faithfulness ? Owing to the modifications which we have found it necessary to introduce into the doctrines of original sin and of atonement, we must universalize our conception of faith. It is no longer the appropriation to oneself of some long past transaction in heaven or on earth, but that inward apprehension of spiritual things, and that peaceful trust in God's forgiving and sustaining love, which Christ sought to establish in the world. This is the true way of righteousness, leading to the free acceptance of an inflowing grace and power, in contrast to the weary struggle of meritorious works. But this very faith, which seems to reveal to us the inmost heart of God, forbids us to believe that he has doomed to eternal woe all from whom he has withheld this precious gift. In ways which he sees best he is leading every man in his own order ; and wherever any unselfish ideal floats before the mind and captivates the will, we may see the beginning of that faith which is ultimately to overcome the world, and bring in the kingdom of God.

It has already been pointed out that sanctification, as distinct from justification, almost necessarily involves a prolonged and varying experience. It is possible that in some fiery and convulsive moment heart and will may turn to God, and life begin again under the government of new principles, new faith and hope and love, and the soul, amid its sorrow for the past, find peace and joy in the assurance of



the Divine forgiveness, and in the consciousness of being now on the side of God against all evil in itself and in the world. But sanctification, the perfect cleansing of the inward springs of life, the bringing of the whole nature, all the thoughts, desires, and affections, into complete harmony with the Spirit of God, is confessedly not an instantaneous process. A man may have become a temple of the Holy Spirit, and fully conscious of the oracles of truth and righteousness within him, and, nevertheless, the weeds of sin may grow in some neglected corner, and the sacrifice offered on the altar of the heart may not be always pure. If there are hours of exalted communion and blessed vision, there are also times of humiliation and repentance, and the peace that knows no change is not yet. We must, however, observe a very wide distinction between the sin of the good man and the sin of the bad man. The former does not sin through deliberate preference, but falls before some sudden temptation or impulse owing to the frailty of a nature which is not yet made perfect; and so, while he looks upon sin as a foe that must be conquered, his faults may draw him nearer to God by deepening his humility and his sense of dependence on a strength higher than his own. But the bad man sets his will deliberately against the law of right, and looks upon holiness and justice as the foes that stand in the way of his desires.

In considering the conditions of sanctification the old question of the will meets us once more. Is 'the perseverance of saints' to be relied upon? Can a man who is truly converted never become a castaway? Is he to lie passive in the hand of God, and simply wait for the Spirit to breathe upon the trembling strings of the heart, and draw forth a heavenly music? Not only the Catholics, but the Lutherans, admit the possibility of relapse; and the Augsburg Confession expressly rejects the teaching of those who say that if men have once become pious, they cannot fall again.<sup>1</sup> To me it seems clear from ordinary

<sup>1</sup> Art. xii.



experience that this is a correct view, and consequently that here at least the will must co-operate with the work of God. Even in the first glowing age of inspiration the danger of a relapse through faithlessness of will was plainly seen. Paul practised self-discipline, lest, having preached the gospel to others, he should himself be reprobate ;<sup>1</sup> and it is not without reason that we are warned against quenching the Spirit,<sup>2</sup> and forgetting that we were cleansed from our former sins,<sup>3</sup> and are exhorted to be earnest in making our calling and election sure,<sup>4</sup> and to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,<sup>5</sup> to say nothing of the constant admonitions to live in a manner worthy of our Christian profession. All may be summed up in the terse injunction, ' If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit ' ;<sup>6</sup> that is, let the outward conduct, which is so largely dependent on the will, be conformed to the promptings of the Spirit, the principle of life, within. From such passages, founded as they are on a genuine experience, we may see where the action of the will is required. It is plain that we cannot by a direct exercise of will create any spiritual grace ; but we can use or abstain from using the means of grace. As I have already explained, I cannot lay down any hard and fast doctrine about these, and each man must judge for himself where he can find the best help. For the generality of men it is reasonable to assume that those which have been sanctioned by prolonged usage are really such ; and, if nothing else, the fact that they come to us laden with the prayer and consecration of saints in many lands and many ages, must give them, for those at least who are not strangely destitute of human sympathy and imagination, a power of appeal which cannot belong to any new observance. However, this is not the place to discuss again the existing means of cultivating the spiritual life ; what concerns us at present is this, that a man may by deliberate choice observe or neglect to observe the

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. ix. 27.<sup>2</sup> I Thess. v. 19.<sup>3</sup> II Pet. i. 9.<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 10.<sup>5</sup> Philip. ii. 12.<sup>6</sup> Gal. v. 25.



means of grace, or, to put it more generally, cultivate or neglect to cultivate the religious life. The other opportunity for the exercise of the will is in the manifestation of the hidden life upon the visible scene. We can deliberate on the requirements of Christian principle, and endeavour to carry out these requirements faithfully and simply. When we are perfectly holy within, good works will be the spontaneous and inevitable fruit of the Spirit; but till then reflection must decide where Christian duty lies, and the will must direct the steps on the path which is seen to be right.

### 5. The Consummation of the Divine Life

The consummation of man's religious growth is described in the New Testament as 'eternal life,'<sup>1</sup> or simply 'life.' This life is a present possession, a fact which is emphasized especially in the Johannine writings.<sup>2</sup> It is the life that belongs to the eternal realm, as distinguished from the transience of a mere earthly existence, the death of sin and alienation from God. In its highest expression, it is 'the life of God';<sup>3</sup> and as the eternal life was made manifest in Christ, it is 'the life of Jesus,'<sup>4</sup> which was given to the Son by the Father.<sup>5</sup> Hence Christ, being a 'quickening spirit,' is himself called 'the life.'<sup>6</sup> It follows that this highest life is, for the Christian, Divine sonship, an incorporation of the Divine life with our humanity, God dwelling in man, and man in God. This, and not any profession of dogma, is the essential distinction between the Christian and the non-Christian. 'If any man has not Christ's spirit, he is not his.'<sup>7</sup> This spirit is love, and 'he that abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.'<sup>8</sup> So it is that 'He who has the Son has the life';<sup>9</sup> and he need not fear the scorn and reproaches

<sup>1</sup> Ζωὴ αἰώνιος.

<sup>2</sup> John iii. 36, v. 24, vi. 47, 54; I John iii. 14, 15, v. 12, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iv. 18.

<sup>4</sup> II Cor. iv. 10.

<sup>5</sup> John v. 26.

<sup>6</sup> John xi. 25, xiv. 6; Col. iii. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. viii. 9.

<sup>8</sup> I John iv. 16.

<sup>9</sup> I John v. 12.

of men, for 'no one can snatch him out of the Father's hand.'<sup>1</sup> Is it said that eternal life consists in the *knowledge* of God and Christ?<sup>2</sup> Yes; but, taken in connexion with all the other teaching, this cannot be a mere intellectual knowledge of their metaphysical relations, but a spiritual comprehension of their spiritual nature, a profound perception of their love and holiness, and of the communion of the Father with his children, which is possible only to the purified heart and surrendered will; and this living in the upper air, where alone we gaze upon Divine realities, is the eternal life, even though the intellect may stumble through the want of lower knowledge, and the lips may be dumb in the presence of unutterable revelations to the soul. It is not the wise, or the disputers of this world, that enter this holy of holies, but those who, in humility and faith, seek not their own wills, but the will of him that sent them, and who know that following the commandment which speaks in their conscience is eternal life.<sup>3</sup>

This leads to the doctrine of a future life. It is not my purpose to survey here the philosophical arguments which bear upon this subject. They confessedly furnish no more than probabilities, and many wise and good men have failed to find in them the satisfaction which they desired. Our faith in immortality is not due to the cold perception of a scientific fact, but to the glowing anticipations of religious trust. The belief, whatever may be its precise origin, seems to be a constituent part of religion. Professor Salmond, who has carefully examined the evidence, says, 'There is the fact that, so far as investigation has gone, belief in some sort of existence after death is found to be a catholic belief of humanity.'<sup>4</sup> Frequently, however, the future life was regarded as a dim and shadowy existence; and it seems clear that the first Christian disciples felt that 'life and immortality' had been brought to light<sup>5</sup> with a vividness which was wholly new. Whatever may be the precise facts connected with the resur-

<sup>1</sup> John x. 29.<sup>2</sup> John xvii. 3.<sup>3</sup> John xii. 49 sq.<sup>4</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, 1895, p. 12.<sup>5</sup> II Tim. i. 10.



rection of Christ, the Apostles appear to have had an overwhelming assurance of his risen and glorified life. It has not been the design of Providence to transmit the facts in consistent and indisputable narratives ; and although we must be deeply impressed by the undoubting and exulting faith of these early disciples, it is impossible for us to place the same dependence on external events. But whatever outward testimony they may have had, for them, as for us, the deepest roots of faith were inward. He who believed in the Son of God had the witness in himself that God had given him eternal life.<sup>1</sup> Christians had the 'earnest of the Spirit,'<sup>2</sup> which was a pledge of their future inheritance.<sup>3</sup> So, even more exclusively, must it be with us. The conscious life with God, of the human child with the Divine Father, is the life of eternity ; and folded in the Father's love, we can look forward with hope and trust to the world that lies beyond the reach of sight and touch, where we shall breathe a diviner air, and walk in the fulness of communion with God, and with saintly and beloved souls.

I will allude to only one objection that is brought against the Christian hope, because it appears to rest on a religious ground, and presumes to look down upon the common herd from the superior position of self-renunciation. How mean and selfish, some one says, to wish for any further life when the earthly scene is closed : as for me, I am grateful for the time I have spent here, and am content to return into nothingness, like a guest who departs, full of good cheer, from a banquet. But others may think that such language, with its boastful assumption of gratitude and humility, is really the expression of an abnormal egotism. They who speak thus can be thinking only of themselves : they have been royally feasted, and they want no more. But what of those who have not been royally feasted, those to whom life has been a long struggle with oppression and misery, those

<sup>1</sup> I John v. 10 sq.

<sup>2</sup> II Cor. v. 5 ; and see Rom. viii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. i. 13 sq.



who through the ardour of a mighty faith have striven for human good through agonies of persecution and scorn? They doubtless were willing to be even anathema for the sake of their brethren; but is it selfish in us to believe that their faith has not been a mocking dream, and that the work which took its shape from the conscious majesty of an immortal being was not founded on ignorance and falsehood? Paul says, 'If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable.'<sup>1</sup> How paltry and selfish, cry the superfine votaries of death! So Paul, with his high-sounding phrases, was working simply for the pleasures of a future paradise! No; not so. But the hope of immortality is so bound up with religion that it gives the scale of our humanity, and, if it be false, the whole of our outlook into the spiritual and eternal world is a deceit, as when a prisoner awakens from dreams of liberty to his clanking chains and hideous dungeon; and nothing can be more pitiable than to build our life upon falsehood, and to renounce the solid blessings of earth, which alone have any reality, for ideals which are only the crazy fancies of a diseased brain. If there be no eternal life, we have been constructed on erroneous principles; and we are yielding, not to selfishness, but to the irresistible drawings of the Spirit when we expand the wings of the soul, and soar, in anticipation, into that upper air, where we shall see face to face, and know even as we are known. It is no sign of grace to believe that we are to be separated for ever from God, and that the dark veil is never, for us, to be withdrawn from the high mysteries of his providence. And to come to earthly friends, it is not the self-forgetting and simple who deny that the beautiful souls whom they have known, who have loved them, and whom they have loved, have sunk into the pit of nothingness. To take the supreme instance, it is not for our own sakes that we refuse to believe that Christ was tortured into annihilation on the cross.

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. xv. 19.



In regard to the mode of existence, the locality, and the occupations of the future life it is best to confess our total ignorance. We may indulge our imagination, in order to render our ideas more vivid by clothing with a body the unsubstantial forms of abstract thought; but we should remember that our imagination may be far unlike a reality which lies wholly beyond our experience. The New Testament maintains on the whole a reverent reserve upon these subjects, and some of its most picturesque delineations are obviously figurative. It was inevitable, however, that the great hope should assume more or less definite shapes, and that these should pass from popular conceptions into rigorous doctrine. The passage into the final condition presented itself to the primitive Christian mind as a resurrection of the dead, which became more clearly defined as a resurrection of the body, and even a resurrection of the flesh. The representation, however, was not uniform. Paul, while insisting on a doctrine of resurrection, emphatically asserts that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,' and that, though not all are to die, yet all must be 'changed' when the great consummation comes.<sup>1</sup> He looked for a 'spiritual body' which apparently was to be evolved out of the 'psychical body' that was laid in the grave.<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere he contrasts with our earthly tabernacle 'a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,' and longs to be clothed with his 'habitation which is from heaven.'<sup>3</sup> And again he says that Christ 'will fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory.'<sup>4</sup> And for our future residence we are to ascend in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so remain for ever with him.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, towards the close of his life he expected an immediate union with Christ when death had dissolved his earthly ties, having, as he said, a desire to depart and to be with him.<sup>6</sup> Christ himself speaks of the future

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. xv. 50 sq.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 44.

<sup>3</sup> II Cor. v. 1 sq.

<sup>4</sup> Philip. iii. 21.

<sup>5</sup> I Thess. iv. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Philip. i. 23.



life under the form of resurrection ; but his descriptions are presented in parables, and are evidently appeals to the moral judgment, and not dogmas for the understanding. But in his solemn reply to the Sadducees he clearly intimates that the conditions of the future life will be quite different from those of our earthly existence. I think we may safely say that the doctrine of resurrection in its crudest form involves an impossibility : the world could not contain or support its population. To the modern mind it is equally difficult to believe that the countless millions of men, even in spiritual bodies of glory, are to float about for ever in the air. Some such doctrine was perhaps necessary in order to convey the notion of personal identity, and this is probably the underlying truth, around which various conceptions clustered. But though the body is at present indispensable for mutual recognition, and though the operations of the mind are now dependent on the brain, the union of mind with body is a mystery, and we certainly cannot know that consciousness requires a nervous system. It may be that their intimate union is essential for this stage of our being, but that we are destined to pass to other and fairer worlds ; and this translation is impossible till we have laid aside our 'muddy vesture of decay.' But it is enough for us to know that we cannot be where God is not, and that our highest ideals toil painfully after God's realities.

Although the idea of retribution did not universally, in early religions, attach itself to the belief in a future life,<sup>1</sup> nevertheless, where the moral element asserts itself, and the recognition of duty and responsibility becomes clear, it is inevitable that death should present itself as a solemn crisis in man's destiny, or, in other words, that judgment should follow the termination of his sojourn here, and fix, for good or ill, the future conditions of his being. The saying, 'Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap,'<sup>2</sup> commends

<sup>1</sup> See Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. vi. 7.



itself both to reason and experience, and we may accept it as the fundamental Christian teaching on this subject. Our vision of judgment may be determined by the habits of our time or the creative skill of our imagination ; but in the statement of doctrine we must not go beyond principles, which are plainly revealed to us in our earthly lot. When or where or how the judgment will take place we cannot tell. Whether there will be an unveiling of the secret soul which none but the eye of God has ever seen ; whether we shall simply feel a sweeter and lovelier peace than we have felt on earth, or, on the contrary, hear inwardly a more emphatic pronouncement of the judgment which conscience is always passing upon us now, we do not know. But we do know that Christ's distinction is between the good and the bad ; that he will not accept prophecies in his name, and wonderful works, and cries of ' Lord, Lord,' in place of doing the will of his Father ; that his disciples are to be known by their love one to another ; that the blessed of his Father are those who perform deeds of sympathy and mercy towards their fellows ; and that those who go away into the dark are the men who work iniquity, or neglect the calls of humanity. And if condemnation is pronounced upon the unbelieving, it is upon those who prefer the darkness to the light because their deeds are evil, and who through blindness and hardness of heart misrepresent and persecute those who would lead them to a better way. Of the rejection and punishment of men for supposed intellectual errors there is no trace.

The conditions of the future life have been differently conceived by Catholics and Protestants. The former teach that there is a purgatorial fire, by which the souls of the pious are tortured for a definite time, so that they may enter the kingdom of heaven without stain.<sup>1</sup> This doctrine seems more in conformity with the facts of human nature than

<sup>1</sup> Council of Trent, Sessio vi., Canon xxx. ; Sessio xxii., Cap. ii ; *Cat. Rom.*, Pars I, de artic. v., Cap. vi., § v.



that of the Protestants, who divide men sharply into two classes, assigned respectively to heaven and hell. Catholics also teach that there was a 'limbus,' where the souls of saints before the advent of Christ enjoyed a peaceful habitation, without any sense of pain, and supported by the blessed hope of redemption. These were liberated through Christ's descent into hell.<sup>1</sup>

In regard to the duration of punishments Catholics and Protestants are agreed : this life decides man's fate once for all. The former, however, make a merciful distinction. The receptacles of the damned are not all of one and the same kind. There are hidden retreats in which souls are detained who have not reached heavenly beatitude ; but there is another most foul and dismal prison where the souls of the damned are tortured with perpetual and inextinguishable fire, in the company of unclean spirits.<sup>2</sup> The sternness of Calvinism combines these two states into a single doctrine. According to the Westminster Divines, 'The punishments of sin in the world to come, are everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell fire for ever.'<sup>3</sup> This doctrine has appeared to many moderns so atrocious, and so irreconcilable with the love of God revealed in Christ, that they reject it, and try to show that the New Testament contains a larger hope. The Universalists believe in the final salvation of all souls ; others have recourse to the thought of conditional immortality, and suppose that the incorrigible will at last cease to exist. The New Testament is eagerly explored, and ingeniously interpreted, in order to obtain authority for these more comforting expectations ; but since we have not regarded the Bible as a store of magical cryptograms, we need not join in the controversy, and I may be content to refer the reader to the careful and judicious treatment of the question

<sup>1</sup> *Cat. Rom., ibid.* § vi.

<sup>2</sup> *Cat. Rom., ibid.* § iv.

<sup>3</sup> *Larger Catechism*, 29.



by Professor Salmond.<sup>1</sup> He himself, relying upon man's freedom and moral responsibility, accepts the view 'that man's immortality is determined by the spiritual attitude to which he commits himself here, that the moral decision made in the brief opportunity of this life is final, and that the condition consequent on it in the other world is one of eternal blessedness or the opposite'; but this 'has no necessary connexion with ideas of punishment which were once current, or with those realistic pictures of hell and crude conceptions of the retributive awards of Divine justice with which it has been burdened. . . . it has to be relieved of all such accessories.'<sup>2</sup> He adds that 'the principle of *degrees* in reward and punishment must be taken in all its breadth as an essential and qualifying element in the doctrine in question.' This, he thinks, 'is the proper corrective to the dogmas of a second probation and a universal restoration. It gives all the alleviation which other views of the future profess to give, and it gives it without doing violence either to the power of man's will or to the sufficiency of grace here.'<sup>3</sup> Now I think it must be admitted that there is such a thing as being too late; that there are opportunities which, if once let slip, never recur; and that in this life the sins of long ago leave a spot of pain in the memory, which even becomes more acute as the conscience becomes more sensitive. Nevertheless, this pain is not constant, and may vanish in either of two ways. It may disappear in a deadness of the moral nature, which is sometimes described as death in the New Testament; but if moral pain is obliterated in this way, it is succeeded by the misery of unsatisfied desire, for selfish craving gnaws the heart, and poisons the fountains of life. On the other hand, the pain of the awakened soul, which perhaps we may describe as purgatorial, though it becomes more acute as our love of righteousness deepens, may yet be lost in a divine glory, when the soul is conscious only of the

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, pp. 523 sqq., 592 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 661 sq.

<sup>3</sup> pp. 670 sq.



love of God, and there is no room for any thought of self. These are the moral facts which govern our judgment, and we may feel assured that, as men pass away into the future world, they must reap as they have sown ; and there, for us, the curtain drops. It is hardly safe to take the brief span of our life on earth as the measure of eternity ; and though there is many a small hell on our fair planet, and wicked men harden themselves in sin, nevertheless, so long as we believe in Divine love, and see the pain of the cross borne for sinful man, we must believe that God does not pronounce an irreversible doom, and that the sufferings of the future may be not only punitive, but remedial. It is, I think, true that Christ seems to sanction a final division between the good and the bad, and holds out no hope of future restoration ; but it is difficult to believe that he who came to seek and save the lost had no such hope. It may be that the question never presented itself as it does to our minds. As space has, to our imagination, enlarged its borders, so has time ; and when Christ or others spoke of 'eternal,' I doubt whether they were thinking of what would be the state of souls billions of centuries hence. Death was the great crisis, which sifted men according to their deeds ; and they passed away to the rewards and punishments belonging to eternity, in contrast with those of our earthly state. This was what immediately concerned mankind, and they did not attempt to see beyond the decisions of the great assize. For us too it may be more reverent not to endeavour to penetrate the dark veil. It is enough to know that the good and bad alike are in the hands of God, and that he will be neither cruel nor unjust. There are mysteries of iniquity and suffering on earth which we cannot solve ; much less, with our limited knowledge, can we solve the mysteries of eternity. But God is love ; and we may wait in trust for the lifting of the veil.



## CHAPTER VIII

### ESCHATOLOGY

THE consummation of the divine life in society is spoken of as 'the kingdom of God.' This is present wherever the will of God is the accepted rule of life. Its essence lies in the communion of the soul with God. As St. Paul pithily describes it, 'The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.'<sup>1</sup> In other words, it does not consist either of scruples about merely external observances or in disregard of such scruples, but in the perfection of spiritual character; and since we are not already perfect, we may, while recognizing its presence, nevertheless pray for its fuller advent in ourselves. The case of society is analogous, but different. There are individuals who, whatever their imperfections may be, seem to enshrine the Divine Spirit, and make us feel the presence of an overruling sanctity. But there is no civil society which we can acknowledge as an organized expression of the Divine will. The kingdom of God is indeed present as a power of holy life working against the world's evil; but society as a whole, teeming as it does with unconquered evil, appears sadly remote from the spirit of Christ. It is the universal prevalence of that spirit, drawing together the nations of the world into a holy brotherhood of the children of God, which must constitute the Divine kingdom upon earth; and therefore the advent of that kingdom is not

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiv. 17.

inappropriately described as a return of Christ in glory, victorious over all evil, and making the spiritual power of righteousness everywhere triumphant. The hope of this blessed consummation of the world's history may enter into all our prayers, while we leave to the imagination of the poet the forms which it will assume, the catastrophe which will precede it, and the heavenly splendours which will accompany its advent. But the aspiration after a new heaven and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness, has been shaped by Christian faith into a dogma of Christ's return in the most literal sense. This dogma is most clearly expressed in the New Testament; and yet, in the form which it assumed in the minds of the first disciples, it has been completely falsified by history. It is, at least to my mind, an incontrovertible proof that the abiding power of Christianity lies deeper than dogma, and that even the divinest inspiration is not a guarantee against intellectual error. But how far Jesus himself sanctioned this error it is very difficult to decide; and in order to arrive at a reasonable opinion we must survey the evidence.

The Evangelists ascribe to Christ certain predictions of a second coming before the then living generation had passed away. We must not dismiss these as a late and unspiritual interpolation simply because a belief of this kind would, from our modern point of view, be extravagant and fanatical. Whether a belief is fanatical or not depends largely on the prevalent ideas of the time; for the fanaticism is due, not to the falsity of the belief in itself, but to the excited and unbalanced state of mind in which it has its origin. Paul was a man of education, full of sound practical wisdom, and capable of writing the deepest spiritual truth in imperishable words; and yet he believed that the Lord would descend from heaven with a shout, and that the disciples then living would be caught up in the clouds, to meet him in the air.<sup>1</sup> No one with Paul's mental power could hold

<sup>1</sup> I Thess. iv. 16 sq.



that belief now. We must not therefore reject sayings which are ascribed to Jesus on the sole ground that they do not harmonize with our ideal of a twentieth century teacher. We are inquiring into the facts in the life of an historical person, and we must proceed by historical methods, and not adapt the history to our own predilections.

There is an indisputable and impressive fact which has an important bearing on our inquiry. It was the universal belief of the primitive Church that Jesus would return to earth before the first generation of believers had passed away. This will become clear if we bring passages from various documents together under one view. I have already referred to the First Epistle to the Thessalonians,<sup>1</sup> where Paul speaks in the first person: 'We that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord': and he professes to base this statement upon 'the word of the Lord.' The same subject is treated at length in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians;<sup>2</sup> but the personal expectation is not so clearly pronounced, though i. 7 and ii. 1 certainly suggest a coming within his own lifetime. In I Corinthians the hope is still confident that 'we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,' that 'the dead shall be raised . . . and we shall be changed';<sup>3</sup> and it is intimated that the time is short, and all earthly conditions have such an evanescent value as to be practically non-existent.<sup>4</sup> Paul tells the Romans that 'the night is far spent, and the day is at hand.'<sup>5</sup> And towards the close of his life, though he began to feel that he might die before the great advent, he still was looking for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, from heaven.<sup>6</sup> This belief was not confined to Paul. At the beginning of Acts we are assured that Jesus went up into heaven, and would come again in like manner,<sup>7</sup> and it seems implied in one of Peter's addresses that the Christ would be sent to the men who were

<sup>1</sup> I Thess. iv. 13-v. 11.

<sup>2</sup> II Thess. ii. 1-12.

<sup>3</sup> I Cor. xv. 51 sq.

<sup>4</sup> I Cor. vii. 29-31.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. xiii. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Philip. iii. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Acts i. 6-11.

listening to him, provided they repented.<sup>1</sup> James too is living in 'the last days,' and is confident that 'the coming of the Lord is at hand,' and 'the judge standeth before the doors.'<sup>2</sup> In I Peter we are warned that 'the end of all things is at hand,'<sup>3</sup> and that 'the time is come for judgment.'<sup>4</sup> In I John also 'it is the last hour,' as was proved by the antichrists who were to precede the great consummation.<sup>5</sup> The Seer of the Apocalypse takes up the strain, and speaks of things 'which must shortly come to pass.'<sup>6</sup> Among these things are 'a new heaven and a new earth';<sup>7</sup> and Jesus declares that 'the time is at hand,' and that he comes quickly.<sup>8</sup> The Alexandrian culture of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews does not prevent him from holding fast 'the confession of our hope that it waver not,' as he saw 'the day drawing nigh,' and applied to his own time the prophecy, 'For yet a very little while, he that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry.'<sup>9</sup> Finally, the late Epistle, II Peter, shows that the non-fulfilment of the expectation was an obstacle to Christian faith. Mockers were asking, 'Where is the promise of his coming?' The fathers had fallen asleep, and all things went on as they had done from the beginning. The writer replies that the Lord is only giving time for repentance, that with him one day is as a thousand years, and that the presence of the mockers was a sign that the 'last days' were really come.<sup>10</sup>

There are various types of doctrine in the New Testament ; but this one belief, which history has failed to verify, was as universal as it was tenacious, and seems to have been quite a fundamental dogma in the primitive gospel. What was its origin ? We might, I think, fairly say that it was almost a necessity of faith among Jewish disciples, whose minds were imbued with the Messianic idea. They had risen to the belief that the Crucified might be the Christ ; but his suffering could

<sup>1</sup> Acts iii. 19-21.<sup>2</sup> James v. 3, 7-9.<sup>3</sup> I Pet. iv. 7.<sup>4</sup> I Pet. iv. 17.<sup>5</sup> I John ii. 18.<sup>6</sup> Rev. i. 1.<sup>7</sup> Rev. xxi. 1.<sup>8</sup> Rev. xxii. 10, 12, 20.<sup>9</sup> Heb. x. 23, 25, 37.<sup>10</sup> II Pet. iii. 3-13.



not do away with the prediction that he was to rule in regal splendour over the renovated earth. The distinctive work of the Messiah, the establishment of the kingdom of God, with himself as its visible head, was still to be accomplished ; and thus the confession that Jesus was the Christ virtually involved belief in his second advent. The withdrawal into heaven would naturally be regarded as of short duration, for men do not put off their enthusiastic expectations to a far distant future. Moreover, John the Baptist had declared that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and Jesus himself (for this we need not doubt) had repeated the declaration. In this way we might, I think, account for the prevalent belief. And yet so universal and so confident a conviction can hardly have arisen without some support in the teaching of Jesus himself ; and when we find distinct attestation that it was so, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the reports which have come down to us rest on at least a substantial basis of fact.

In judging of the historical attestation two considerations seem to be of importance : first, the testimony is, in essential points, the same in all three Synoptics, and therefore in all probability represents the primitive apostolic tradition ; and secondly, the prediction is repeated on several occasions, so that it can hardly be ascribed to the mistaken insertion of a piece of Jewish apocalypse. In the great eschatological speech Jesus declares that the Son of Man shall come in clouds with great power and glory, and that ‘ this generation shall not pass away until all these things be accomplished.’<sup>1</sup> At an earlier time, in sending out the Apostles to preach, he uttered the promise, ‘ Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come.’<sup>2</sup> This is not indeed in the parallel passages in Mark and Luke ; but there are obvious reasons for its omission, whereas it is not easy to explain its improper interpolation. Connected with this is a

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiv. 30, 34 ; Mark xiii. 26, 30 ; Luke xxi. 27, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. x. 23.



promise made in reply to Peter's question, 'What then shall we have?' Jesus answers, 'Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'<sup>1</sup> This also is wanting in Mark and Luke; but the latter has a very similar expression in his narrative of the last supper. Jesus there says, 'I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'<sup>2</sup> More important is the solemn declaration which Jesus made after the confession of Peter: 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power.' So the words stand in Mark,<sup>3</sup> and they are substantially the same in Luke.<sup>4</sup> In Matthew<sup>5</sup> the earlier part of the saying is wanting, so that there is nothing to identify the Son of Man with Jesus himself; and the concluding words are, 'till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom,' a sense which is, however, implied in the other accounts. In Mark and Luke it is clear that Jesus and the Son of Man are one and the same. Lastly, there is the solemn reply of Jesus to the adjuration of the high-priest, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.'<sup>6</sup> Luke omits here the coming with the clouds; but his Gospel is probably late enough to account for the omission on the ground that the prophecy had not been fulfilled.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 28.<sup>2</sup> Luke xxii. 29, 30.<sup>3</sup> Mark viii. 38-ix. 1.<sup>4</sup> Luke ix. 26 sq.<sup>5</sup> Matt. xvi. 27 sq.<sup>6</sup> Mark xiv. 61 sq.; Matt. xxvi. 63 sq.; Luke xxii. 67-69.



It is difficult to suppose that all these reports are without foundation in fact ; and if we could be sure that they had not become seriously coloured in transmission, we should be forced to conclude that Jesus expected to return in person, and establish the Messianic reign, before his own generation had passed away. I confess, however, that I find it impossible to reconcile this view, not only with the classical saying that 'the kingdom of God cometh not with observation,'<sup>1</sup> but with a series of parables which represent it as of hidden, silent, and gradual growth. It is true that in some of these parables an end of the world is spoken of, when the Son of Man will send forth his angels, or the return of a master is contemplated who will call his servants to account ; but the end of the world is placed quite indefinitely in the future, and the return of a master or the coming of a bridegroom is susceptible of a spiritual interpretation. On the other hand, the general lesson of the parables is perfectly explicit, and a kingdom which was to come like a flash of lightning, and with awful portents in earth and sky, could not be described as coming not with observation. It may be said, however, that men are not always consistent, and that the popular view may sometimes have become uppermost in the mind of Jesus ; but this kind of inconsistency is not easily reconciled with the general calmness and balance of his character. His foresight of his death shows how clearly he looked facts in the face, and did not allow himself to be carried away by empty dreams. But he may have used language which was afterwards misunderstood. We know that he was fond of speaking figuratively, and of setting forth spiritual truth in material images ; and the exaltation of the prophetic gift tends to rise into poetry, and does not easily express itself within the trammels of logical speech. It is, therefore, possible that in asserting his confident belief that his cause could not be put down, that the kingdom of humanity would surely come, and though men might kill his body the spirit of his life would

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvii. 20.



reign with more triumphant power, he may have adopted the grand imagery of the apocalyptic seer, and in the rapt vision of a poet have used phrases which were afterwards translated into literal prose.

This view finds some support in the fact that he never says expressly, I Jesus will return and reign in Palestine within the present generation. The predictions are always in the third person, and even as they stand there is a certain grandeur and vagueness about them which tempts us to avoid a perfectly literal interpretation. It is also apparent in one or two cases that we cannot rely on the accuracy of the reports. We have already noticed that in the remarkable passage where it is said that the Son of Man will be ashamed of those who are ashamed of him these words are wanting in Matthew, and that if you omit them in Mark and Luke the return of the Son of Man disappears. Matthew, accordingly, inserts the Son of Man in the final part of the quotation, from which he is absent in Mark and Luke. Now in an earlier chapter of Matthew<sup>1</sup> there is a saying which, though in very different words, may be taken to represent the declaration which is omitted in the later narrative :—‘ Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.’ Here the Son of Man disappears, and Jesus speaks in his own person ; but there is no reference to a return or to any particular time. Is not the conclusion justified that sayings have been combined, and to some extent interpreted, according to the judgment of the narrator ? There is another passage, about the final judgment, which is equally instructive. Towards the end of the Sermon on the Mount are the words, ‘ Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, . . . and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you.’<sup>2</sup> Here Jesus distinctly claims for himself the office of final judge of those who are

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 32 sq.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vii. 22 sq.



fit or unfit for the kingdom of heaven in the day when it will be established. But this saying is wanting in the corresponding passage in Luke ; and we find its equivalent in a different place,<sup>1</sup> and there the declaration in the first person is put into the mouth of a figurative 'master of the house.' This again betrays the work of combination and interpretation ; and the latter instance especially shows how easily the figurative statement of a general principle might, in perfect good faith, be changed so as to express the prevalent belief.

I am therefore inclined to the opinion that the universal belief of primitive Christianity in the bodily return of Christ rested upon certain utterances of Jesus himself ; but that these utterances were misinterpreted owing to the inability of the disciples to shake off the expectation that the present age was to be closed by a grand catastrophe ; and, further, that owing to this misinterpretation the reports which have come down to us are more or less distorted. This whole vein of thought must seem to us strange and fantastic ; but we must remember that in the science of that age heaven, with its hosts of angels, was only a few miles off, and the fate of man was the great object of interest to the celestial hierarchy. At any moment a tremendous crisis might come, and the predicted Son of Man appear in the clouds to establish his empire of righteousness. It is all the more impressive that Jesus recognizes the beauty of the natural order, and declares that the kingdom of God shall come with the same gradual development as the growing seed or the hidden working of leaven ; and we may infer that in his own thought his coming was to be of a spiritual kind, conformed to the slow and equable processes of nature, a secret germ of life planted in the heart of society, and silently working out, in the progress of the centuries, its determinate results.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiii. 25-27.

## INDEX

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*(‘Contents’ refers to the table of contents at the beginning of the volume.)*

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>ABBOTT, E. A., on the existence of the devil, 237.<br/> on the force of <i>ἰδιος</i>, 301.<br/> work on St. Thomas of Canterbury, 327, 365.</p> <p>Abélard, 178, 344.</p> <p>Abraham, 44, 67, 382.</p> <p>Absolution, 452.</p> <p>Acceptatio, 345.</p> <p>Acceptilatio, 345.</p> <p>Adam, his fall contingent or predestined, 468.<br/> Paul’s allusions to, 206.<br/> the phrase ‘in Adam,’ 274.<br/> his sin and its result, 221-228, 465.<br/> unfallen, 205.<br/> unhistorical, 206.<br/> referred to, 277.</p> <p>Adoptianism, 259.</p> <p>Advent, second, 516-523.</p> <p>Agape, 449.</p> <p>Agnosticism, 114.</p> <p>Alexandrian theologians, 255.</p> <p>Allegorical interpretations, 85.</p> <p>Allen, Professor, 103, 442.</p> <p>Angels, 171-173, 338, 340.</p> <p>Anselm, ‘Cur Deus homo,’ 335-341.<br/> names himself along with God, 132.<br/> rejects Kenosis, 284.<br/> rejects the notion that Christ bore our punishment, 352.</p> | <p>thinks good works may exceed duty, 350.<br/> his view of the cause of Christ’s suffering, 357.</p> <p>Ante-Nicene Fathers, imperfect in their doctrine of the Trinity, 138.</p> <p>Anthropology, 203.</p> <p>Antioch, Theologians of, 255.</p> <p>Antiochus Epiphanes, 309.</p> <p>Aphraates, 426.</p> <p>Apollinaris of Laodicea, 254.</p> <p>Apologetics, 4.</p> <p>Apology for the Augsburg Confession, definition of Sacraments, 411.<br/> doctrine of Grace, 481.<br/> faith and the Holy Spirit, relation of, 492-493.<br/> faith makes righteous, 500.<br/> the godless do not belong to the true Church, 373.<br/> grace of the Sacrament received only through faith, 413.<br/> the meaning of ‘justify,’ 493-494.<br/> rejects merit, 496.</p> <p>Apostles’ Creed, 138, 255, 332, 396.</p> <p>Apostolical Constitutions, 131.</p> <p>Apostolic Fathers, without the doctrine of the Trinity, 138.</p> <p>Apostolical succession, 395-397, 460.</p> <p>Apuleius, 403.</p> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



- Aquinas, see Thomas.  
 Aristion, 425.  
 Aristotle, 225.  
 Arminians, 123, 345.  
 Armstrong, R. A., 155.  
 Arnold, W. T., 310.  
 Ascension, The, 277.  
 Assistentia, 99.  
 Assos, Inscription at, 310.  
 Athanasian Creed, quoted, 122;  
     referred to, 139, 333.  
 Athanasius, argues from the eternity  
     of fatherhood, 146.  
     asserts the eternity of the Son, 139.  
     describes God as 'simple,' 145.  
     distinguishes a creature from a  
         son, 165.  
     on the argument that creation  
         must be eternal, 151-152.  
     rejects Kenosis, 284.  
     taught that man was to be  
         deified, 304.  
     thought Christ's sonship unique  
         in kind, 261.  
     use of *κυριακόν*, 368.  
 Atonement, see Contents, Part IV,  
     Chapter IV.  
     in 'The Christian World,' 346.  
 Attritio, 451.  
 Augsburg Confession, on the Church,  
     373.  
     on faith and works, 492-493.  
     on free will, 481.  
     on Original sin, 224-225.  
     on the Sacraments, 411, 413.  
     teaches that the pious may fall  
         again, 503.  
 Augustine, definition of the Church,  
     370.  
     definition of a Sacrament, 405.  
     God 'is what he has,' 115.  
     on the argument from love, 146.  
     on free will, 464.  
     on the infallibility of Scripture, 86.  
     on the number of the elect, 337.  
     on the Trinity, 124.  
     rejects Kenosis, 284.  
     his view of evil, 219.  
     referred to, 177, 215, 479.  
 Augustus, 309, 310.  
  
 BAB, 311.  
 Bacon, Professor, 382-383.  
 Baptism of Christ, 314.  
 Baptism, Sacrament of, see Contents  
     Part IV, Chapter VI.  
     among the inhabitants of Mexico,  
         423.  
     of infants, 420, 432.  
 Baptists, 422.  
 Barling, 157.  
 Basil of Ancyra, 125.  
 Becket, 327, 365.  
 Behá'u'lláh, 311, 336, 441.  
 Belgic Confession, 343.  
 Bellarmin, 409.  
 Bethune-Baker, 124, 125.  
 Bible, see Contents, Part I, Chapter  
     III, and 400-403.  
 Bishop, regarded as a mediator and  
     an earthly god, 131. See also  
     under Ordination in Contents,  
     Part IV, Chapter VI.  
 Bossuet, 116.  
 Bousset, 430.  
 Browne, Professor, 311, 441.  
 Bruce, A. B., 196, 231.  
 Burnett, Thomas, 192.  
  
 CÆSAR, Julius, 309, 310.  
 Caldecott, 110.  
 Call, in religion, 488.  
 Callistus, 142.  
 Calvin, 442-443, 465.  
 Carpenter, J. E., 311.

- Catechismus Romanus, on Baptism, 417.  
 on the Church, 369-372, 384.  
 on Confirmation, 433.  
 on the dignity of the priesthood, 457.  
 on the Eucharist, 435-438.  
 on the functions of Christ, 317.  
 on a limbus, 512.  
 on the Means of grace, 399.  
 on Penance, 453.  
 on the permanent character of Ordination, 458.  
 on Purgatory, 511.  
 on Reconciliation, 244.  
 on Sacraments, 405.  
 on Satisfaction, 341.  
 on the work of the Trinity in the Incarnation, 259.  
 recognizes Jesus as a prophet and teacher, 288.
- Catholic Dictionary by Addis and Arnold, on the failure of 'intention,' 410.  
 on the imperfection of the doctrine of the Trinity among the Ante-Nicene Fathers, 138.  
 on the infallibility of the Bible, 83.  
 on the meaning of 'Apostolic Ministry,' 395.  
 on the Sacrament of Matrimony, 461-462.
- Cato, 225.
- Cave, Professor, 20.
- Celestine, 256.
- Chase, Dr. F. H., 382, 426, 428.
- Chrism, in Confirmation, 433.
- Christ, see Jesus Christ.  
 meaning of the term, 295-398.
- Christian consciousness, 80-81, 96, 285.
- Christian Reformer, The, 237.
- Christology, reasons for a, 252-253.
- Church, doctrine of the, see Contents, Part IV, Chapter V.  
 as a source of doctrine, see Contents, Part I, Chapter IV.  
 militant, 370.  
 'notes' of the, 371-372, 390-397.  
 organ of Christ's spirit, 293.  
 triumphant, 370.  
 visible and invisible, 374, 376.
- Church of England, admitted the communion of Rome, 377.  
 denies salvation to those outside of the Church, 474.  
 on Baptism, 421-422.  
 on Christ's present condition, 277.  
 on the Church, 105-106, 374-375.  
 on Confirmation, 434.  
 on the Eucharist, 448.  
 on Ordination, 458-459.  
 on Original sin, 223-224.  
 on Predestination, 466.  
 on Reconciliation, 244.  
 on Sacraments, 412, 413.  
 on the Sacrifice of Christ, 341-342.  
 on the Scriptures, 83-84.
- 'Church of God,' 387-388, 394.
- Church, R. W., 132.
- Cicero, 188, 309.
- Clement of Alexandria, allegorizes the bread and wine in the Eucharist, 446.  
 applied 'dogma' to articles of Christian belief, 1.  
 doctrine of the work of Christ, 303.  
 rests predestination on foreknowledge, 469.  
 referred to, 225, 426.
- Clement of Rome, Epistle of, 387.
- Clement VI, 344.
- Clementine Homilies, 428.
- Cobbe, Miss F. P., 51, 181.
- Coleridge, 375, 462.
- Communicatio idiomatum, 258, 261.



- Communion, name for Eucharist, 435.  
 Concursus, 189.  
 Confession, 451-452, 453, 454.  
 Confessional, 453.  
 Confession of Faith, meaning of, 2.  
 Confessio Tetrapolitana, on the Eucharist, 412.  
 Confirmation, 433-434.  
 Consciousness of the living Christ, 286.  
 Conservatio, 189.  
 Constantinopolitan Creed, 255.  
 Consubstantiation, 448.  
 Contrition, 451, 453, 488.  
 Conversion, see Contents, Part IV, Chapter VII.  
 Conybeare, F. C., on Matt. xxviii. 19, 425-426.  
 Copernicus, 391. [224, 229.  
 Corruption, total, of human nature,  
 Council of Chalcedon, commends Cyril, 256.  
     definition of the person of Christ, 254, 257, 282, 284.  
     28th Canon, 102-103.  
 Council of Constance, 437.  
 Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381, condemned Apollinaris, 254.  
     on the Holy Spirit, 139.  
 Council of Constantinople, A.D. 553, condemned pre-existence of souls, 222.  
     implies the *communicatio idiomatum*, 259.  
 Council of Ephesus, condemned Nestorius, 256.  
 Council of Ephesus, the 'Robber Synod,' ratified Monophysitism, 257.  
 Council of Florence, 409.  
 Council, Fourth Lateran, on the Incarnation by the whole Trinity, 259.  
     on the persons of the Trinity, 126.  
     on the unity of the Divine essence, 145.  
     sanctioned Transubstantiation, 437.  
 Council, Second, of Nicea, 145.  
 Council of Trent, condemns Protestant views, 412.  
     considers celibacy more blessed than marriage, 461.  
     doctrine of the Church not defined, 369.  
     on the Bible, 82.  
     on Grace and Free Will, 485.  
     on Justification, 499.  
     on Ordination, 458.  
     on Original righteousness, 204.  
     on Original sin, 223.  
     on Penance, 453.  
     on Purgatory, 511.  
     on Reconciliation, 244.  
     on Sacraments, 409.  
     on Tradition, 100.  
     refuses the cup to the laity, 437-438.  
     rule about Sponsors, 420.  
     Transubstantiation a 'tremendous mystery,' 439.  
 Council, Vatican, of 1870, on the evidential value of miracles, 79.  
     on the infallibility of the Pope, 98.  
     on the inspiration and interpretation of the Scriptures, 83.  
     on tradition, 100.  
 Cranmer, 459-460.  
 Creationism, 222.  
 Creed, definition of, 2.  
 Cremer, 245, 246.  
 Cudworth, 304.  
 Cutts, E. L., 460.  
 Cyril of Alexandria, on the change wrought by symbolism, 442.  
     opposed the doctrine of Nestorius, 256.  
 Cyril of Jerusalem, does not sanction the *opus operatum*, 424-425.

- on the change wrought by symbolism, 442.  
 on the eternity of the Divine fatherhood, 146.  
 on our ignorance of God, 115.  
 thought Christ's death was a ransom paid to the devil, 334.
- DALE, 286-287.  
 Dalgairns, on the personality of God, 115, 155.  
   on transubstantiation, 439.  
 Darwin, 167, 391.  
 Definitions of religion, 21.  
 Deissmann, on the formula 'in Christo Jesu,' 273-274.  
   quotes a papyrus, 309.  
   reviews Heitmüller, 430.  
 Demiurge, 163.  
 Demoniacal possession, 238-239.  
 Determinatio (in the doctrine of providence), 190, 191.  
 Devil, see Contents, Part III, 279.  
 Didache, 264, 443.  
 Dill, Professor, 423-424.  
 Dio, 309.  
 Diognetus, Epistle to, 304.  
 Dionysius, Pope, 145.  
 Directio (in providence), 190.  
 Divorce, 462.  
 Docetism, 254, 443.  
 Doctrinal Theology, defined, 1.  
   distinguished from dogmatics, 3-5.  
 Doctrine, distinguished from dogma, 1.  
   two processes in the formation of, 61.  
 Dods, Dr. Marcus, 346.  
 Dogma, definition of, 1-2.  
 Domitian, 310.  
 Dorner, 20, 411.  
 Dort, Synod of, 484.  
 Dositheus, 395, 409, 439, 469.
- Δοῦλοι, as applied to Christians, 298-299.  
 Drummond, J., 6, 86, 260, 285, 378, 379.  
 Drummond, W. H., 227.  
 Dualism, 163.  
 Dugdale, 231.  
 Duns Scotus, 344.
- Ἐαυτοῦ, force of, 301.  
 Edwards, Jonathan, 287.  
 Edwards, T. C., 149.  
 Egoism in religious teachers, 266-272.  
 Ἐκκλησία, 368, 379.  
 Elect, supposed fixed number of, 337-338.  
 Election, 465.  
 Element, in Sacraments, 408.  
 Empedocles, 309.  
 Ἐν, use of in later Greek, 273.  
 Ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι, and other forms, 429.  
 Ἐνωσις, 256.  
 Ephesus, Inscription at, 310.  
 Ephraem, 383.  
 Eschatology, see Contents, Part IV, Chapter VIII.  
   among the early Christians, 476.  
   in the teaching of Jesus, 378.  
 Eternal torment, rejection of doctrine of, 40. See also Punishment.  
 Ethics, Theological, distinguished from Doctrinal Theology, 1.  
   not to be included in Dogmatics, 19.  
 Eucharist, see Contents, Part IV, Chapter VI.  
 Eusebius, enumerates the functions of Christ, 317.  
   quotes Atticus, 309.  
   quotes Origen on the eternity of Divine fatherhood, 146.  
   reading in Matthew xxviii. 19, 425-426.  
 Eutyches, 257.



- Eve, 205, 206, 224, 226.  
 Evil, see Contents, Part II, Chap. IV.  
 Evolution, not antithetical to creation, 166-168.  
     of man, 232, 316.  
     relation to pain, 171.  
 Extreme Unction, 454-456.
- FABIANUS, 434.  
 Faith, essential to justification, 500.  
     in conversion, 488-489.  
     in relation to works, 492.  
     nature of, 502.  
     relation to the Holy Spirit, 492-493.  
 Fall, the, see Contents, Part III.  
 Fidejussores, 419.  
 Flesh, in opposition to spirit, 217.  
 Foreknowledge, 468-469.  
 Forgiveness, 185, 347-348.  
 Form, in the Sacraments, 408.  
 Formal, in actions, 212. [285.  
 Formula of Concord, denies Kenosis,  
     on Christ's obedience, 343.  
     on Grace, 481, 482-483.  
     on Justification, 494-495.  
     on Predestination, 467-468.  
     on universality of Christ's satisfaction, 344, 386.  
     reason not to be used about the Trinity, 120.  
     teaches that faith is a gift, 493.  
 Formula Consensus Helvetici, 88.  
 Fremantle, Dean, 346.  
 Friends, Society of, has no sacraments, 389, 411, 415, 422.
- GALILEO, 105.  
 Garrison, W. Ll., 313.  
 Gelasius, 447.  
 Gerhard, 87.  
 Gess, 283.  
 Gibbon, 132, 145.  
 Gladstone, 377, 385, 391-392.  
 Gnostics, 163, 164.  
 God, see Contents, Part II.  
     an absolute unity, 145.  
     belief in his existence and attributes, 68-70.  
     love of, 355, 362.  
     wrath of, see wrath.  
 Gore, editor of Romanes's 'Thoughts on Religion,' 167.  
     in conflict with Athanasius, 152.  
     on demoniacal possession, 238.  
     on the evidence of the Trinity furnished by personality, 148.  
 Gorham Judgment, 422.  
 Grace, Augustine's view of, 465.  
     cannot be earned, 355.  
     Divine, 186.  
     doctrine of, see Contents, Part IV, Chapter VII, 497-498.  
     Means of, see Contents, Part IV, Chapter VI.  
     not limited by artificial rules, 229.  
     not unconditional, 352.  
     waits to receive the penitent, 350.  
 Green, Dr. S. G., arguments for the Deity of Christ, 266, 267, 270, 275, 279.  
     on Kenosis, 283.  
 Gregory Nazianzen, 125.  
 Gregory of Nyssa, change in the sacredness of dedicated objects, 442.  
     justifies deceiving the devil, 334.  
     on the mystery of the Trinity, 120.  
     on the negative character of moral evil, 219.  
     sets aside the *opus operatum*, 424.  
 Grimm, on the meaning of *καταλ-  
     λάσσεσθαι*, 245-246.  
     'ransom' never applied to sacrifice in the LXX, 329.  
     summary of argument of Richard of the Abbey of St. Victor, 147.

- quotations taken from, 120, 123, 219, 278, 466, 472, 483.
- Grove, W. R., 166.
- Gruppe, 27.
- Gubernatio, 189, 190.
- Guiscard, Robert, 131.
- Gumlich, 412.
- Gunkel, 430.
- HAGENBACH, definition of dogmatic Theology, 4.  
quotations taken from, 122, 259, 344, 443, 447, 464, 472.
- Hale, Horatio, 163.
- Halicarnassus, Inscription at, 310.
- Harnack, 383.
- Hastings, Dr., 264, 283.
- Hedge, F. H., 219.
- Heitmüller, 430.
- Heraclitus, 117.
- Hilary, 428.
- Hill, J. Hamlyn, 383.
- Hillel, 440.
- Hippolytus, on Christ as the only genuine son, 304.  
on the deification of man, 303.  
on the persons of the Trinity, 141-142.
- Hodge, 91, 92, 123-126.
- Holy Spirit, see Contents, Part II, Chapter II.  
doctrine of the Council of Constantinople quoted, 139.
- Honorius I, 258.
- Hooker, calls God 'a mere unity,' 145.  
doctrine of the Trinity not express in Scripture, 122.  
on the incomprehensibility of God, 116.  
on the mode of distinction of the persons of the Trinity, 157.  
quoted to show literary use, 127, 132.
- the whole essence in each person of the Trinity, 123.
- Hosmer, F. L., 328.
- Hurons, 163.
- Hutton, R. H., 147.
- Hypostatic union, 259, 263, 281.
- \**Idios*, force of, 301.
- Ignatius, 131, 387-388, 443.
- Illingworth, 115, 149.
- Illuminatio, 417.
- Illumination, 488.
- Images of God avoided on account of his unity, 145.
- Impeditio (in providence), 190.
- Imputed righteousness, 492, 493-495, 500.
- Incarnation, 255, 259, 260, 261.
- 'In Christ,' 272-275.
- Infralapsarianism, 468.
- Inquirer, The, letters in, about the will, 175.
- Inquisition, 105, 216.  
decree of the Roman, about Scripture, 83; about tradition, 100.
- Intuition, 51.
- Invisible Church, 374, 376.
- Irenæus, man to become son of God, 303.  
tradition, 104.  
view of the bread and wine in the Eucharist, 445.
- Isaac, 44.
- Iverach, 310.
- JAMES, Professor, 23, 75, 120, 287.
- Jellett, 199, 200.
- Jerome, 141.
- Jesus Christ, doctrine of his person.  
see Contents, Part IV, Chap. III,  
doctrine of his work, see Contents, Part IV, Chapter IV.



- doctrine of his infallibility, 318-323.  
 doctrine of his pre-existence, 261.  
 his intercession, 363.  
 kingdom of, 366.  
 his peculiar consciousness of God's  
   fatherhood, 477.  
 his principles of judgment, 477-478.  
 a representative of mankind,  
   358-359.  
 his sinlessness, 312-315, 339.  
 John of Damascus, 178, 258.  
 Judgment, future, 511.  
 Judgment, private, 391.  
 Jukes, 231.  
 Justification, see Contents, Part IV,  
   Chapter VII, 244.  
 Justin Martyr, compares the Sacra-  
   ments to the Greek mysteries,  
   404.  
 is gentle towards those who be-  
   lieved in the simple humanity  
   of Jesus, 139-140, 255.  
 large view of Christianity, 225, 384.  
 reading in Matt. xxviii. 19, 426.  
 teaches the subordination of the  
   Logos, 276-277.  
 his view of the elements in the  
   Eucharist, 444.
- KAFTAN, 4, 181. [246.  
*Καταλλάσσεσθαι*, meaning of, 245-  
 Kennett, 288.  
 Kenosis, 101, 282-285.  
 Kepler, 167.  
 Keys, power of the, 372, 452, 454.  
 Kingdom of God, meaning of, 377-  
   379, 388, 515.  
 Knight, Professor, 155.  
 Knowling, Dr. R. J., 456.
- LABBE, Concilia, 103, 126, 145, 222,  
   259, 437.  
 Lagarde, 428.
- Laity, reasons for withholding the  
   cup from the, 437.  
 Lake, Professor, 426, 427-428.  
 Lang, Andrew, 24.  
 Leibniz, 192, 219.  
 Leo XIII, 396.  
 Libertas realis, 211, 225.  
 Liberty, formal, 211.  
 Lietzmann, 311.  
 Life, eternal, 505-506.  
   the future, see Contents, Part IV,  
   Chapter VII.  
 Lightfoot, John, 268, 378.  
 Lightfoot, J. B., 443.  
 Limbus, 512.  
 Loisy, 116, 387, 396.  
 Lotze, 115, 176.  
 Lowe, W. H., 379.  
 Luther, 466, 470-471, 473.  
*Ἀνθρωπότης*, 330.
- MACKINTOSH, 110.  
 Macpherson, 165, 172, 188.  
 Magna Mater, 424.  
 Man, doctrine of, see Contents,  
   Part III.  
   antiquity of, 11, 206.  
   lofty terms applied to, 302-305.  
 Manchester College, 6.  
 Manicheans, 163.  
 Manicheism, 464.  
 Marcion, 445.  
 Martensen, 225, 226, 229.  
 Martineau, Dr. J., objects to calling  
   Christ 'Lord,' 298.  
   on the Divine consciousness, 154.  
   on the self-assertion attributed  
   to Christ, 267. [155.  
   treats of the argument from love,  
   treats of free will and foreknow-  
   ledge, 175.  
   treats of the problem of evil, 195.  
 Mass, sacrifice of the, 438.

- Material, in actions, 212.  
 Matrimony, 461-462.  
 Matter, in the Sacraments, 408.  
 Mayor, J. B., 189.  
 Melanchthon, on Conversion, 488-9.  
     on Faith, 492-494, 500.  
     on the futility of works, 481.  
     on Original sin, 224, 225.  
     on Predestination, 466-467.  
 Melchizedek, 457.  
 Merit, see Contents, Part III.  
     of Christ's passion, 340, 341, 351, 498, 499.  
 Meritum de condigno, and de congruo, 496.  
 Μεσίτης, used of Christ, 326.  
 Methodius, 150, 151.  
 Μετουσίωσις, 438.  
 Michalcescu, 258.  
 Milman, 258.  
 Miracles, 170, 177.  
 Mithra-worship, 423, 424.  
 Moberly, on the meaning of person in the Trinity, 123.  
     rejects the notion that Christ endured the vengeance of God, 346.  
     treats of Abélard's doctrine of Atonement, 344.  
     treats of early views of the Atonement, 334.  
 Mogilas, 98, 409, 438.  
 Mohammed, 253.  
 Monophysites, 258.  
 Monophysitism, 256.  
 Monothelitism, 258.  
 More, Henry, 304.  
 Moses, functions of, 317.  
     made God to Pharaoh, 308.  
 Moulton, Dr. J. H., 273, 301.  
 Müller, Julius, 219.  
 Müller, Max, definition of religion, 22.  
     describes baptism in Mexico and Peru, 423.  
     on dualism, 163. [241.  
     on the superiority of Christianity, quotes Gruppe, 27.  
     thinks religion universal, 24.  
 Μυστήρια in the Greek Church, 409.  
 Μυστήριον, 404.  
 Mystery, 158, 260.  
  
 NAME, use of the word in the Bible, 128-129.  
 Narrowness in religion explained, 474-477.  
 Nero, 309, 310.  
 Nestorius, 256, 257.  
 Newman, F. W., 8.  
 Newman, J. H., belief in God drawn from within, 8.  
     definition of religion, 22.  
     maintains the authority of conscience, 16.  
     on Pope Honorius I, 258.  
     on the scepticism of the intellect, 13.  
 Newton, 167, 288.  
 Nicene Creed, 139, 255, 332.  
 Nicolas I, 433.  
 Niemeyer, 484.  
 Nitzsch, F. A. B., 4, 87, 88, 175, 178, 283.  
  
 ODGERS, J. E., 403.  
 \*Ονομα, use of, in the Bible, 129.  
 Opus operatum, 409, 412, 417, 424, 430.  
 Orders, Anglican, 396, 458, 460.  
 Ordination, see Contents, Part IV, Chapter VI.  
 Origen, calls God a 'monad,' 145.  
     deals gently with deniers of the Trinity, 140-141.  
     denies that the Church was built on Peter alone, 102, 380.  
     doubt about his reading in Matthew xxviii. 19, 426.



- human nature to become Divine, 303.  
 maintains the eternity of God's fatherhood, 146.  
 on the bread of the Eucharist, 446.  
 on sacrifice, 333-334.  
 referred to, 177.  
 statement of the contents of ecclesiastical doctrine, 104, 332.  
 taught the pre-existence of souls, 222.  
 taught the subordination of the Logos, 141.  
 thought Jesus was given up to the devil, 334.  
 thought the universe eternal, 150-1.  
 thought works might exceed our duty, 351.  
 Orthodoxy, failure of, 280.  
 Οὐσία, 123.  
 Ovid, 309.
- PAGET, on the sacramental system, 413, 414, 415.  
 Pain, 193-195, 220.  
 Paley, 79.  
 Parker, Theodore, 22, 288.  
 Passover, applied figuratively to Christ, 327.  
   nature of the, 416.  
 Patrini, 419.  
 Peccatum originale, 224.  
 Pelagius, 215, 464, 479.  
 Penance, 450-454, 499.  
 Penitence, 35.  
 Pentecost, 410.  
 Perichoresis, 126, 258.  
 Permissio (in doctrine of providence), 190.  
 Perseverance of saints, 503-504.  
 Persona, meaning of, 123-126.  
 Personality of God, 112-115.  
 Peter Lombard, 344.
- Phelps, M. H., 336.  
 Philippi, 172, 278.  
 Philo, describes the functions of Moses, 317.  
   explains God's immanence through the Logos, 160.  
   treats the LXX as verbally inspired, 85. [269.  
   uses the phrase 'I say unto thee,'  
 Photius, 150.  
 Pilate, 11.  
 Pius X, 83.  
 Plato, 188, 225, 309.  
 Plotinus, 219.  
 Poenitentia, 450.  
 Polycarp, Epistle of, 387.  
   Epistle on the martyrdom of, 387.  
 Positivists, 112.  
 Prayer, see Contents, Part II, Chapter IV.  
 Predestination, see Contents, Part IV, Chapter VII.  
 Presbyterian ordination, 459.  
 Prescott, 328.  
 Priene, Inscription at, 310.  
 Priesthood of Christians, 325.  
 Πρόσωπον, 123, 125.  
 Providence, see Contents, Part II, Chapter IV.  
 Ptolemies, 309.  
 Punishment, 180-185, 350.  
   duration of future, 512-514.  
 Purgatory, 511.
- QUENSTEDT, 120.
- RACOVIAN CATECHISM, on Baptismal Regeneration, 422.  
   on the expiation effected by Jesus, 345.  
 Rashdall, on the impersonality of love, 123.  
   on *proprietas* in the Trinity, 125.  
   referred to, 433.

- Rationalism, 12.  
 Reconciliation, see Contents, Part IV, Chapter II, 359. [330.  
 Redemption, figurative use of, 329-  
 Regula fidei, 138.  
 Religion, definitions of, 22, 46.  
     different meanings of the word, 21.  
 Religious consciousness, 21, 62, 80.  
 Religious language applied to men,  
     308-311.  
 Religious nature, see Contents,  
     Part I, Chapter II, 3.  
 Remorse, 354.  
 Repentance, 349.  
 Reprobation, 465-466, 468, 501.  
 Resurrection, 509.  
 Retribution, 510-511.  
 Revelation, in relation to Ethics,  
     15-19.  
     in relation to religion, 78-81.  
 Richard of St. Victor, 146.  
 Righteousness, original, 204-206, 222.  
 Ritschl, 347.  
 Romanes, 167, 238.  
 Roses, 3, 151.  
 Roskoff, 24.  
 Royce, 196.  
 Rufinus, 141.  
  
 SABATIER, AUGUSTE, claims freedom  
     for Protestant dogmas, 3.  
     maintains the necessity of dog-  
     ma, 2.  
     on the Atonement, 346.  
     on the Divine office of pain, 196.  
 Sabellianism, 124, 127.  
 Sacraments, see Contents, Part IV,  
     Chapter VI.  
 Sacrifice, development of idea of, 44.  
     essential meaning of, 357-358.  
     figurative use of the word, 326-329.  
 St. Bartholomew, massacre of, 105.  
 St. Clair, 196.  
 Salmond, 506, 513.  
 Salvation, 300.  
 Sanctification, 499, 502-503.  
 Sanday, on the belief of the primi-  
     tive Church, 264.  
     on Kenosis, 283.  
     on the sonship of Jesus, 260-261.  
     on the teaching of I Thess., 264-  
     265, 266.  
 Sanday and Headlam, 273.  
 Satisfaction, Anselm's view of, 337,  
     338, 352.  
     canonical, 341, 452, 453.  
     Catholic doctrine, 341, 452.  
     different views of its extent, 344.  
     'legal' and 'penal,' 344.  
     vicarious, not applicable to sin,  
     349-350.  
 Savages, religion of, 24.  
 Schaff, 88.  
 Schechter, 382.  
 Schleiermacher, definition of re-  
     ligion, 22.  
     on the place of religion in our  
     faculties, 47.  
     on the problem of pain, 193.  
     on the universality of grace, 472.  
     thought God could do nothing  
     but what he does, 178.  
 Schürer, 85.  
 Scott, Sir W., 272.  
 Scripture, doctrine of infallibility  
     of, 40, 82-92.  
 Second Advent, 266; and see  
     Eschatology.  
 Seneca, 310.  
 Septuagint, authorization of Sixtine  
     edition, 132.  
     infallibility ascribed to, 85.  
 Sextus Empiricus, 309.  
 Sin, see Contents, Part III.  
     heinousness of, 353-354.  
 Snell, B. J., 346.



- Socinians, 345, 422.  
 Socrates, the historian, 426. [361.  
 Socrates, the philosopher, 225, 331,  
 Solidarity of mankind, 355-356.  
 Sophocles, 245.  
 Souls, origin of, 222-223.  
     pre-existence of, 222.  
 Spencer, Herbert, 154.  
 Sponsors, 419-420.  
 Starbuck, 483.  
 Stevens, 336, 346, 349.  
 Stoics, 192, 195.  
 Strabo, 309.  
 Strauss, 172.  
 Strawley, 219.  
 Strong, Dr., 125, 413-414.  
 Sublapsarianism, 468.  
 Substance, 125.  
 Substantia, meaning of, 123.  
 Suckling, 147.  
 Suetonius, 309, 310.  
*Συνάφεια*, 256.  
 Supererogation, works of, 350.  
 Supralapsarianism, 468.  
 Susceptores, 419.  
 Swete, 132.  
 Synergistic opinion, 483.  
  
 TATIAN'S DIATESSARON, 383.  
 Taurobolium, 423.  
 Taylor, Dr. John, 6.  
 Tchertkoff, 313.  
 Temptation, see Contents, Part III.  
 Tendencies in Religion, 57.  
 Tennant, F. R., 213.  
 Teresa, St., 120.  
 Tertullian, first to use Trinitas, 133.  
     'major part of believers' re-  
     jected the Trinity, 140.  
     on the bread and wine in the  
     Eucharist, 443-444.  
     his reading in Matt. xvi. 18, 384.  
     simplicity of tradition, 104.  
     taught traducianism, 223.  
     use of 'sacramentum,' 403-404.  
 Testaments of the Twelve Patri-  
     archs, 131.  
 Textual Criticism, 92.  
 Theodicy, 192.  
 Theophilus of Antioch, 133.  
 Theotokos (*θεοτόκος*), 256.  
 Thomas Aquinas, on the beginning  
     of the universe, 165.  
     on the creation of matter, 164.  
     on 'persona' in the Trinity, 125.  
     on the Satisfaction of Christ's  
     death, 344.  
     on the simplicity of God, 145.  
     rejects Kenosis, 285.  
     thinks self-love the principle of  
     sin, 218. [120.  
     the Trinity inaccessible to reason,  
 Tradition, Catholic view of, 100.  
 Traducianism, 223.  
 Trajan, 310.  
 Transubstantiation, 437.  
 Tree of life, 226.  
 Trevelyan, G. M., 328, 329.  
 Trinity, see Contents, Part II,  
     Chapter II.  
     the dogma should not be imposed  
     as a test of Christianity, 143.  
     reason why the second person was  
     incarnate, 339.  
 Tulloch, 147, 304.  
 Tymms, 153.  
  
 UNITARIAN CONGREGATIONS without  
     dogmas, 2-3.  
 Unitarianism, 279.  
 Unitarians, 261, 279, 280, 390.  
 Unity of God, 117-118, 145.  
 Unity in nature, 118.  
 Unity of mankind, 231, 233.  
 Universe, changed view of, 277.  
     eternity of, 150-153.



Ὑπόστασις, 123, 125.

Upton, 175.

Urwick, 226.

Ὑφιστάμενον, 123.

VERIFYING FACULTY, 53.

Viaticum, 435.

Vicarious suffering, 356-357.

Virgin, birth from a, 275.

Visible Church, 374, 376.

WALLACE, A. R., 278-279.

Walton, Izaak, 127, 132.

Ward, Mrs. H., 329.

Warrington, 6.

Wegscheider, 469.

Wendland, 310.

Wendt, on free will and foreknowledge, 175.

on the ideal of man, 205.

on the nature of sin, 213.

treats the problem of evil, 196.

Wernle, 383.

Wesley, 281.

Westminster Confession, denies salvation to those not professing Christianity, 473.

on Baptism, 422.

on the Church, 106-107, 375-376.

on the Eucharist, 448.

on the Fall, 224.

on future punishment, 512.

on Justification, 496-497.

on Predestination, 466.

on the Sacraments, 412, 413.

on the Sacrifice of Christ, 342.

on the Scriptures, 84, 89, 92.

Wetstein, 86, 440.

Wieland, 327, 447.

Will, 211, 215, 221, 222, 224, 225, 481, 501, 503-505.

Willareth, 196.

Williams, S. F., 328.

Winer, 123, 205, 345, 409.

Witchcraft, 105.

Word of God, 400-403.

Wrath of God, 224, 250-251, 360-361.

XENOCRATES, 225.

Xenophon, 245.

YALKUT, 382.

ZAHN, 383.

Zeno, 225.

Zoroastrians, 163.







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